

FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY: ISSUES FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE

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1 INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of ways that one could examine feminist contributions to anthropology and sociology within the context of a handbook on philosophy of science. The first and most obvious is to simply catalogue the various contributions that feminism has made to each of these disciplines, in part through the increasing presence of women in these fields. Sandra Harding refers to this approach as the “women worthies” or the “women’s contributions” projects in a feminist science [1986]. These projects are respectively, rediscovering and honoring women who were forgotten contributors and cataloguing their efforts. As Harding notes, these projects, while worthwhile, do not fundamentally alter the nature of the disciplines in question and do not offer much from the perspective of philosophy of social science.

A second possibility would be to note the changes in content that feminism has worked in these two fields, and, indeed, there have been many such changes. Again using Harding’s terminology, the “victimology” project of chronicling the various forms of neglect caused by androcentric science falls into this category. This approach is more germane to the question of how feminism affected the development of anthropology and sociology. Feminism filled gaps both in what was studied and the categories with which the disciplines organized the objects of study.¹ While interesting and transformative of these disciplines in many ways, the fundamental nature of the scientific enterprise in these fields was nonetheless not challenged through these critiques either.

These two approaches to the role of feminism in shaping anthropology and sociology deal only with the *addition* of women and women’s concerns to an existing discipline, both when women are the scientists and when they and their lives become the object of study. Feminism offers something unique, revolutionary, or transforming for these social sciences only if it tackles the theoretical frameworks and methodologies that define these sciences. Judith Stacey and Barrie Thorne offer the following analysis in their “The Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociology”. “The initial period is one of filling in gaps – correcting sexist biases and creating

¹For instance, gender was introduced as a relevant social category.

new topics out of women's experiences. Over time, however, feminists discover that many gaps were there for a reason, i.e., that existing paradigms systematically ignore or erase the significance of women's experiences and the organization of gender. This discovery... leads feminists to rethink the basic conceptual and theoretical frameworks of their respective fields" [1985, 302]. While content critiques are important for understanding both the development and status of feminism in these two fields, it is the constructive critiques, the critiques of the "conceptual and theoretical frameworks" of these social sciences that are most philosophically interesting. Questions feminists have raised about methodology, theory, and the nature of knowledge in their disciplines intersect more directly with contemporary debates in the philosophy of science and raise the question of whether a feminist successor science is necessary or even possible and if so what it would be like.

1.1 *The scope of the discussion*

Using the perspective of the philosophy of science both narrows and broadens the discussion of these social sciences. The narrowing results from examining the *philosophical issues* that arose as feminist anthropology and sociology evolved. The broadening comes from the fact that these philosophical issues run through all of the disciplines that intersect here: philosophy, feminism, anthropology, and sociology. Feminist methodology in sociology and anthropology has raised basic epistemological questions, such as what counts as evidence, what good evidence is, and in what sense these social sciences can be considered objective. These questions are contiguous with more general questions about feminism and science, feminism and knowledge. Though issues discussed here are explored in the context of feminist anthropology and sociology, the discussion is embedded in the broader discussion of the role of values in science and questions of knowledge in context. In addition to presenting an overview of how these debates have played out and looking at their current state, I will also consider ways in which these discussions can inform our understanding of the production of scientific knowledge more generally.

It is standard to identify at least two types of feminist projects in the philosophy of science ([Smith, 1987]; [Wylie, 1998]). As others have done, I refer to these as a "critical project" and a "constructive project".² The critical project begins with the discovery that women, their lives and concerns, are absent both as social scientists and as objects of study. With the greater participation of women, there are changes in the disciplines. Women anthropologists, such as Elsie Clews Parsons (1874-1941), Phyllis Kaberry (1910-1977), and Audrey Richards (1899-1984), brought a different approach to studying culture and society that incorporated attention to women and their roles in a new way.³ Elsie Clew Parsons, for instance, focused on questions of gender and society in the early part of her career,

²So, for instance, Dorothy Smith, in her introduction to *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*, makes this distinction in relation to her own work describing it as both "feminist critique and an alternative to standard sociology" [1987, 2].

³The social scientists mentioned here are intended as examples only, and is in no way an exhaustive list.

during which she worked primarily in sociology. In the second half of her career, she turned to anthropology and studied gender roles, including the phenomenon of gender crossing in Native American societies. Though these were not her only interests, her concern with gender roles marks her clearly as one of the earliest feminist anthropologists.

Sociology followed a similar path, of recognizing women and including them, both as researchers and as objects of research. This, in turn, led to the further recognition that not only were women missing, but the very categories that would have enabled us to see that they were missing were not available. This critique is deeper and more systematic. As Dorothy Smith puts it, "When we started this critical work, we did not realize how far and deep it would go" [1987, 1]. Recognizing gender as a significant category led to the realization that gender permeated the social world and that power was distributed along gender lines (in addition to race and socioeconomic status). Historically, these realizations coincided with a changing understanding of the nature of social scientific knowledge itself and an increasing awareness of the role of the social in knowledge production. Not surprisingly, the next round of criticisms was epistemological. Were the means of knowledge production adequate or appropriate for an understanding of the social world that would serve the interests of women? If not, what alternatives are available? It is here that the constructive project of feminist philosophy of science begins.

Much of the work of feminist sociologists, anthropologists, and epistemologists that I will discuss here has revolved around the constructive project. To take sociology as an example, Dorothy Smith proposed a sociology that "begins in the actualities of women's experience" [1992], raising questions about an alternate feminist methodology. This is a puzzling idea given that the traditional conception of scientific methodology is neutral relative to its subject matter. Some methods may work better than others in particular arenas for pragmatic reasons and there is debate about whether the same methods are appropriate to the physical and social world, but the idea that one needs to use a different methodology to discern the truth about men and women seems suspect. Why should knowledge for women be different than knowledge for men? Isn't knowledge neutral in this regard and really for everyone?

1.2 *Feminist methodology?*

The idea that there might be distinctive "women's ways of knowing" gained some support in the early 1980s. Carol Gilligan's influential [1982] book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, suggested that women had alternative understandings of ethical questions. Also influential in many quarters was the book by that very name *Women's Ways of Knowing* [Belenky *et al.*, 1986]. This work was contiguous with the work of feminist sociologists and anthropologists during this period.

However, both feminists and philosophers of science (including feminist philoso-

phers of science) had important objections to the idea that there was something distinctive, privileged or even fundamentally different about the way women know. Criticisms from at least two perspectives challenged any account of women's knowledge that identified it as distinctive.

First, feminists noted that the very diversity of women's experience mitigates against any project that requires a difference between women's ways of knowing and men's. The very idea presupposes a uniformity of women and their experience that feminists were coming to see did not exist. The notion that all women were some particular way with regard to knowledge (or anything else) evokes a "universal woman" as replacement for the "universal man" that feminism had rejected. In addition, there is the more general critique from those who reject the notion that the central features of science, methodology, or even reason itself could be gendered [Wylie, 1998].

A second roadblock to feminist methodology was that it appeared to duplicate the error of believing that method will provide the key to knowledge, that there is one right method for getting "real" knowledge. Related is the criticism that seeking the right method is looking for a technical fix for a problem of substance. A series of criticisms of the search for a feminist method appear in the late 1980s and early 1990s ([Wylie, 1992]; [Harding, 1987]; [Longino, 1987]), and with them the idea of feminist methodology was increasingly difficult to defend. But in part because of the development of a healthy tradition in feminist sociology and other social sciences (political science, and to some extent anthropology) by the late 1990s, the debate got a second wind in philosophy and has been more explicitly tied to the sorts of epistemological questions that are our concern.

A related issue that spans the critical and constructive feminist projects is the idea that feminist science should provide knowledge "for" women. If a sociology or anthropology "for women" is different from a sociology or anthropology for men or a gender-neutral sociology or anthropology (assuming that there could be such a thing), it would suggest that knowledge is relative to goals. This would mean that knowledge is not objective, in the sense of being value or interest free. Questions about objectivity therefore became a central focus of feminist discussions of methodology, and will provide the central theme of this chapter.

Though there are similarities in the issues and history of the two disciplines, they are different enough both in their focus and in their history. Feminist ideas attach themselves to different traditions in each and while they share a commitment to activism, a focus on the particularity of women's lived experience, and a concern about non-exploitative methodologies, the ability of feminists in each of these disciplines to address these issues is shaped by other factors in the discipline. I will treat them separately but in the process I will make comparisons and return to the question of what general lessons can be drawn for feminist science studies.

1.3 *What makes a social science feminist?*

Before turning to a discussion of feminist anthropology and sociology, it is important to address the general question: what makes a social science *feminist*? Alison Wylie identifies three features that seem to be common among social scientists that identify themselves as feminist. First, feminist social science has as an aim “to empower women by recovering the details of their experience and activities” [1992, 226]. Sociologists had failed to observe women, but more problematically the descriptive categories used by sociologists had failed to capture the relevant features of women’s lives. So a feminist sociology should, in the first instance, avoid these two errors. One way to do this is to uncover the power structures that keep women in positions of subordination, although the best way to do this is open to debate. Wylie suggests that there may be a third requirement for feminist social science, “that problems addressed... are of concern to particular groups of women and useful to them” [1992, 237].

Examining the work of those who self-identify as feminist anthropologists and sociologists we can see three more specific issues and debates that have occupied their interest. The first is ethnomethodology/ethnography. The promise that some kinds of subjectivity lead to greater objectivity or more generally, better social science, through better understanding of those being studied has been addressed in both disciplines, though way the discussion evolves in each is different. The second is the question of whether there is a particular sort of methodology that would be appropriate to feminist research. The most interesting contender for such a title has been standpoint theory or methodology. Standpoint theory is most closely identified with sociology, however, many who have discussed standpoint have argued that it can be seen as a methodological approach for all of the sciences in general [Harding, 1986]. What standpoint theory is, how it works as a scientific methodology and in what way it produces knowledge will be the primary focus of the following section on feminist sociology. Finally, there is a debate about quantitative vs. qualitative methodology and whether quantitative methods are inimical to feminist interests. In many ways, this is the least interesting of the debates because it is increasingly clear that quantitative approaches have been used effectively to support feminist goals. For example, there are quantitative studies that provide compelling evidence that countries with stronger women’s rights or that provide equal education to girls tend to do better economically overall.⁴ The increased use and success of quantitative methods in the social sciences goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

While the urge to find unifying features of feminist social science is both understandable and hard to resist, I would like to suggest an alternative way of thinking about what it is that supports grouping social scientists as feminists. Rather than looking for necessary and/or sufficient conditions or even “family resemblance”, I propose that we think of feminist sociology (and probably “feminism” more gener-

⁴Some examples of the sort of research I am talking about are Isobel Coleman [2004], M. Steven Fish [2002], and T. Paul Schulz [2002].

ally) as descriptive of a particular attitude or group of attitudes or what Bas van Fraassen has called a “stance” and idea he develops in trying to identify what it is to be an empiricist. Though there may be certain beliefs that empiricists have, it is not a commitment to any particular set of beliefs that makes one an empiricist but rather a commitment to a particular approach.⁵ In the case of trying to identify what counts as feminist sociology, we run the risk of identifying feminism too closely with some particular feminist position. If we think of feminism as an attitude rather than a position or even a group of positions, we can avoid this problem.

In the case of feminism, the features of the attitude that we should focus on seem to me to be the following. First, feminist sociologists and anthropologists identify themselves as feminist. Second, that they identify themselves as feminists means minimally that they are conscious of gender as a relevant or at least, *potentially*, relevant category of analysis. Third, they see knowledge as knowledge for some purpose (knowledge for, by, and about women). Finally, the perspective that feminist social scientists seek to have is the perspective of women. This is not one perspective because, of course, there are many women and women’s interests, goals, and desires will vary depending on features of their circumstances. This feature of feminist social science challenges the ideal of objectivity in science.

However, thinking about feminism as a stance rather than a position has the advantage of reshaping the discussion about objectivity. By thinking about feminism as a stance, we recognize that commitments may alter how an object is studied but there is no reason to think that they alter the object itself. The questions that are of interest in evaluating knowledge are questions about what one wants to do with our knowledge; in what ways can we use it to improve our lives? This approach is in the tradition of pragmatism. Rethinking objectivity suggests that it is not simply a question of a match between theory and the world, but rather a relationship between ourselves, theory, and world. This is one of the main lessons that comes from an examination of feminist anthropology and sociology.

2 FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Since Sandra Harding offered a three-part division of feminist epistemologies in *The Science Question in Feminism*, it has become standard when discussing work in this area to identify it as belonging to one of three approaches: feminist empiricism, standpoint epistemology, or postmodern feminist epistemology. Feminist empiricists are usually characterized as advocating a stricter adherence to empiricist principles as a means of eliminating androcentric bias in science. This approach is consistent with the idea that all that is necessary for an improved, nonsexist science is “adding women”.

⁵I have supported the idea that this is a better way to think of philosophical “positions” elsewhere. In the context of rethinking the realism/antirealism debate in science, I advocate that these “positions” be seen as attitudes or stances that are adopted locally by particular scientists for particular purposes [2000].

As we have seen in the discussion above, the more contemporary and radical forms of feminist sociology aim at more than this. It is not surprising then to see that if we employ Harding's characterization the more radical approaches in feminist sociology are standpoint and postmodern approaches. Though both postmodernism and standpoint methodologies have their advocates among feminist sociologists, standpoint has generated a body of interdisciplinary literature that is lively and recent.⁶ As a constructive proposal, standpoint projects have been among the most successful, with a number of feminist sociologists either explicitly making use of standpoint or acknowledging a debt to it.⁷

That having been said, it is both unclear what should be identified as "standpoint theory" and the extent to which standpoint is viable as a project, theory, approach, or methodology for a feminist sociology. The questions that one might raise about it are the same questions that one might raise about a standpoint approach to science more generally. One of the most important of these is the general question about the feasibility of a science that is explicitly incorporates values. Shouldn't science be objective and aren't "impartial" and "value free" among the relevant meanings of "objective" in this regard? Standpoint approaches also explicitly call for a science that "begins in women's experience", as well as calling for a sociology "for women". What these descriptions mean is part of the ongoing controversy about standpoint, but minimally it advocates an approach to sociology that begins from a particular viewpoint.

In addition, if standpoint is a feminist standpoint, as some theorist say that it should be, then it is also explicitly political.⁸ Concerns about a politicized science are raised most particularly in relation to the question of how a politicized science can possibly be a good science. Critics that express concern about these issues often raise the specter of Nazi science or Lysenkoism. This points to some of the one of the most controversial aspects of standpoint theory or feminist philosophy of science more generally. If the claim is that standpoint sociology is a better sociology, at least a better sociology for women, then it would seem to be incumbent on its advocates to explain how this is possible. How can a science be good if it is not objective? In what sense can a feminist sociology be a better sociology? There are a variety of ways of thinking about these issues, ranging from rejecting the connection between standpoint as a method and the deeper epistemological questions it would seem to raise to reconfiguring our thinking about scientific objectivity.

⁶Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michele L. Yaiser identify Chela Sandoval, Kum-Kum Bhavani, Adrien Katherine Wing, and Mari Matsuda as postmodernist feminists of in their collection *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research* [2004].

⁷Among these are Dorothy Smith, Shulamit Rheinharz, Patricia Hill Collins, Marjorie DeVault, Liz Stanley, and Sue Wise.

⁸Among the issues that advocates of standpoint differ over is the question of whether the standpoint that is to be adopted is that of women or of feminists. Dorothy Smith describes it as women's standpoint, whereas Nancy Hartsock calls it a feminist standpoint. The questions about objectivity rise in some form on either description.

2.1 *Standpoint theory*

One aspect of the controversy over standpoint has to do with its origins which are disputed and multiple. Because standpoint is closely identified with Dorothy Smith in sociology, I am going to use Smith's version as the starting point of the discussion. However, I will also explore questions about the possibility of extending some of the key insights that gave rise to standpoint approaches to a more general feminist philosophy of science, including the options that have been proposed, and the difficulties with it that are in the process of being negotiated.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Dorothy Smith developed a method that she described as "beginning from the standpoint of women". Smith's approach is political, though not as explicitly so as some of the other approaches that come from roughly the same period. For instance, Nancy Hartsock's approach is political science is more clearly a Marxist notion of standpoint. Since, for Smith, standpoint is a way of revealing, exploring, and ultimately transforming power relations, it is political in a more general sense. I will focus on Smith's version, though it is important to note that many of the misunderstandings that have haunted the discussion of have resulted from some features of Hartsock's approach specifically.⁹

Though Smith describes her approach in earlier work, it is her more recent defense and clarification of the approach that I will use as a basis for discussion. In 1992 in *Sociological Theory* and again in 1997 in *Signs*, she responds to critics and clarifies the history and original intention of the standpoint method with which she is identified.¹⁰ In these responses, she recounts her original insight and experience that standpoint is an attempt to capture and that she believes was lost in its subsequent formalization by other thinkers.

The experience, of course, was complex, individualized, various. It's hard to recall now at that time we did not even have a language for our experiences of oppression as women. But we shared a method. We learned in consciousness-raising groups, through the writings of other women . . . , in talk, and through an inner work that transformed our external and internal relationships. We explored *our experiences as women* with other women — not that we necessarily agreed or shared our experiences. . . . Remaking sociology was a matter that arose out of practical demands. Established sociology distorted, turned things upside down, turned us into objects, wasn't much use. I thought that we could have a sociology by responding to people's lack of knowledge of how our everyday worlds are hooked into and shaped by social relations, organization, and powers beyond the scope of direct experience.

⁹Hartsock uses object relations theory as a means of identifying the origins of the differences in the viewpoints of men and women as they examine the world around them. This has resulted in her being labeled an essentialist. As we shall see, if standpoint requires an essentialist account of women, then it will not be viable for the purposes that feminist wish to employ it.

¹⁰The critics responded to in the [1992] article are Patricia Hill Collins, Robert Connell, and Charles Lemert. In 1997, she is commenting on Susan Hekman's "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited".

[1992, 89]

From what Smith says here, it is clear that standpoint is intended to be more than viewpoint or perspective. It is *achieved* out of discussions that take place, with consciousness-raising mentioned as a model for such discussions. It involves what is frequently referred to as “studying up”, examining and learning about the power relations and institutions that perpetuate oppression from the perspective of the oppressed. Standpoint is not simply the result of being a woman or a member of some non-dominant group, though being in that social position and embodied as a woman is necessary in order to take the steps to achieve the standpoint. Since it is from the located, embodied standpoint that researchers have their insights, Smith claims that this is not a theoretical position, but an experiential one, and, consequently, she refers to standpoint as a *method of inquiry*, not a theory. It is a method that begins with the viewpoint of women but does not end there. The projects for which this method is suitable take insights from the lives of women and use them to give an account of social structure that reveals the power relations that maintain the oppression of women. This is, at least in part, what it means to have a sociology *for* women. It is a sociology that provides a way of understanding what it is about the world in which they find themselves that perpetuates their oppression. There is more to a sociology for women than this however. In addition to explaining, there is the further purpose of transforming the social world using this understanding. So standpoint is achieved, explanatory, and normative.

Smith rejects what she refers to as the “theorizing” of standpoint and its identification as a feminist epistemology [1997]. Since she refers to women’s standpoint rather than feminist standpoint, it was not her intention to promote a feminist standpoint theory, such as Harding describes.¹¹ She notes that it is Sandra Harding’s work that is responsible for the theorizing that she rejects. She clarifies, “. . . I am not proposing a *feminist standpoint* at all: taking up women’s standpoint as I have developed it is not at all the same thing and has nothing to do with justifying feminist knowledge” [[1997] 2003, 264]. She also states, “For me, then, the standpoint of women locates a place to begin inquiry before things have shifted upwards into the transcendent subject” [1992, 90].

Smith asserts that she is not interested in epistemological issues and does not want to engage in discussions about objectivity. She avoids this engagement by focusing on standpoint as a *method* and in doing so evokes the distinction between a context of discovery and a context of justification. Standpoint is not about issues of justification, in her opinion, but of discovery.

Recent work in the philosophy of science, however, has raised questions about the relationship between values and science in such a way as to throw doubt on whether the distinction between a context of discovery and context of justification is viable. The closely allied distinction between cognitive and noncognitive values

¹¹In fairness to Harding, when she identified the three types of feminist epistemology she did not claim that Smith was an advocate of feminist standpoint but rather used the awareness that she had of Smith’s work as one of a group of related kinds of approaches that she generalized in this way.

has also been called into question. The connection between the two distinctions is that traditionally it has been argued that if values do enter into science, they do so in the context of discovery through the presence of noncognitive values. Such noncognitive values would include social values, such as the differences in what is valued by men and women, oppressor and the oppressed. These social values would show up when one focuses on the sociological starting point of the particular and ordinary experiences of women, i.e, from women's standpoint.

So if we are to consider the question of whether standpoint or any other feminist approach is going to subvert sociology through the introduction of "illegitimate" values or the "illegitimate" use of values, we must first be clear that there are such illegitimate values and that they can in fact be identified. If there is a legitimate distinction between cognitive and noncognitive values, then the cognitive values are those that should be used in the justification of our theories (the context of justification) whereas the noncognitive values, though they may still play some role in the process of knowledge production (in the context of discovery, perhaps) do not have a legitimate role in justification. So when Smith says that her account is not a theory of justification, not an epistemology, and not presented as a theory, she seems to be operating within the framework of a philosophy of science that finds this distinction legitimate.

In a recent article, Sandra Harding affirms that what standpoint calls for is a discussion of the context of discovery. "While many philosophers do not discuss the context of discovery, standpoint theorists think that such discussion is essential" [2004b, 32]. Harding claims that such theorizing can occur as part of a "logic of discovery" and that it is a legitimate arena for philosophy of science. Her point is that philosophy of science needs to include examination of the "context of discovery" in addition to the "context of justification". But both the utility of distinguishing the contexts and viability of the distinction are questionable. The traditional connotations associated with the distinction may be misleading and a complete rethinking of the production of scientific knowledge may be more useful.

While it is widely acknowledged that values enter into scientific reasoning, it has traditionally been argued that they nonetheless do not affect the objectivity of science.¹² There are two parts to this argument. The first is to draw a distinction between cognitive/epistemic and noncognitive/nonepistemic values. Cognitive or epistemic values are those that we value for their ability to enable us to make correct judgments.¹³ So, for instance, the predictive or explanatory power of a theory might be an example of a cognitive/epistemic value. These are sometimes thought to be "truth-preserving" values that are appropriate to the context of justification. Noncognitive or nonepistemic values, on the other hand, are thought to be social, cultural, contextual values that are present in the process of knowledge

¹² "Most people today agree that values enter into science — some values, somehow, somewhere. Few people, if any, still uphold the notion that science in all its aspects is a value-free endeavor." [Machamer and Walters, 2004, 1]

¹³ Sometimes these judgments are claimed to be true, truth-like, or empirically adequate. I am using "correct" as a more neutral term.

production but do not threaten objectivity if they are confined to the context of discovery.¹⁴ So the acknowledgment of values in science is claimed not to threaten the objectivity if both 1) we can distinguish between these two sorts of values; and 2) we can distinguish between the context of justification and the context of discovery.

However, a number of writers have recently noted that the distinction cannot be sharply drawn when we are examining criteria of theory acceptance, or more radically, have claimed that we cannot really make the distinction at all.¹⁵ Larry Laudan urges a further investigation into the relationship between the cognitive and the social [2004] and Hugh Lacey questions the distinction between a context of discovery and context of justification (2004).¹⁶ Helen Longino notes that the distinction reflects what she believes to be an untenable dichotomy between the rational and the social, where the cognitive values have been identified with the rational and the non-cognitive with the social [2002]. Less radically, Miriam Solomon suggests a complete analysis of how theory choice is achieved needs examination of all the “vectors”, social and other that are relevant in a particular case [2001]. Even if it were possible to resolve these issues and make the distinction, Smith’s insistence that standpoint as she has conceived it is not about epistemological matters is misleading. Although standpoint may have been originally proposed as a methodology, methodology and epistemology are intertwined and the putative value of the approach cannot be understood without addressing the underlying epistemological issues.

2.2 *Standpoint criticized and clarified*

In 1997, the journal *Signs* published an article by Susan Hekman along with responses from several whose work she had critiqued. Hekman argued that feminism’s early flurry of interest in standpoint, which she dates to the publication of Nancy Hartsock’s [1983] *Sex, Money and Power*, died down as it appeared that there were untenable presuppositions underlying the approach. She identifies two that are particularly problematic: that standpoint demands that some viewpoints, i.e., those of women, are epistemically privileged; that it does not acknowledge the diversity of women, essentializing woman and replacing the universal man of modernism with a universal woman. However, Hekman argues that standpoint is nonetheless promising and should be reconfigured and reaffirmed in a way that would no longer make it dependent on these assumptions.

¹⁴Philip Kitcher affirms a version of this account in Chapter 3 of his 2001 *Science, Truth and Democracy*, concluding that the “ideal of objectivity need not be dismissed as a fond delusion (p. 41)”.

¹⁵See Peter Machamer and Gereon Walters (eds.), *Science, Values, and Objectivity*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004.

¹⁶Lacey thinks that social values should be “kept in their place”, however in his account he proposes that we think of science in terms of three “moments” rather than two contexts. These are adopting a strategy, accepting theories, and applying knowledge and they do not break down neatly into the former classification.

Hekman's account makes claims about standpoint that appear to be false. First, it does not seem that there was ever any assumption on the part of advocates of standpoint that women were automatically epistemically privileged. Both Smith's claims that standpoint is a *starting place* for inquiry, a place from which to gather evidence and that standpoint needs to be *achieved* would seem to count against this idea. Furthermore, those who have used standpoint, including Smith, have always been sensitive to the diversity of women and have not treated women as a homogenous group. The prominence of such social theorists as Patricia Hill Collins and Uma Narayan among those who think through race, class, and other diversities using standpoint would seem to indicate clearly that there is nothing in standpoint *per se* that precludes the recognition of multiple standpoints. Collins [1986] for instance, advocates the use of a standpoint to analyze race and class in addition to, and in combination with, gender. In describing the ways in which Afro-American women might have insights that other sociologists might not, for instance, Collins says "traditional sociological insiders, whether white males or their non-white and/or female disciples, are certainly in no position to notice the specific anomalies apparent to Afro-American women, because these same sociological insiders produced them. In contrast, those Black women who remain rooted in their own experiences as Black women – and who master sociological paradigms yet retain a critical posture toward them — are in a better position to bring a special perspective not only to the study of Black women, but to some of the fundamental issues facing sociology itself" ([1986, S29]; [2004a, 121]). Collins thus advocates maintaining the standpoint of a Black woman while working as a sociologist and in doing so points out that such a standpoint requires a recognition of diversity among women. The outsider/insider *may* be capable of seeing things that other sociologists cannot but is not assured the ability to do so merely in terms of his or her social location.

Donna Haraway also develops a standpoint project that calls for the acknowledgment of a myriad of standpoints.¹⁷ She reminds us that each of us has experience that is multi-dimensional and so provides us with the means of occupying more than one standpoint. "The topography of subjectivity is multi-dimensional; so, therefore, is vision. 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" [1999, 179].¹⁸

¹⁷Haraway's work sometimes seems more appropriately described as standpoint and sometimes as postmodernist. Her concerns about reconstructing a notion of objectivity, even while acknowledging the necessity of awareness of diversity of viewpoints, would seem to make her less postmodernist than standpoint theorist. She also uses what is clearly a standpoint position from which to develop her account of primatology. However, she also differs from feminist empiricists and some other standpoint theorists in rejecting the dichotomy between relativism and objectivity. As she sees, they are both linked to the "god trick", objectivity as the "view from nowhere" and relativism as the "view from everywhere", which is nowhere as well [1988].

¹⁸I have quoted here from the reprint in Biagioli which differs slightly from the original [1988] article which reads "Subjectivity is multi-dimensional; so, therefore, is vision" [1988, 586].

Much of Hekman's criticism seems therefore, to be based on misreading or misunderstanding, though it must be acknowledged that this sort of misunderstanding is fairly common. The notion that standpoint advocates automatic privilege is present in a number of critiques of feminist thought including those of Susan Haack, Noretta Koertge, and Cassandra Pinnick.¹⁹ Though Hekman's criticisms may be off the mark, the responses they have elicited are clarifying. As Alison Wylie points out,

Whatever form standpoint theory takes, if it is to be viable it must not imply or assume two distinctive theses with which it is often associated: *First*, standpoint theory must not presuppose an *essentialist* definition of the social categories or collectivities in terms of which epistemically relevant standpoints are characterized. *Second*, it must not be aligned with a thesis of *automatic epistemic privilege*; standpoint theorists cannot claim that those who occupy particular standpoints (usually subdominant, oppressed, marginal standpoints) automatically know more, or know better, by virtue of their social, political location [2004, 341].

Sandra Harding identifies four related features of standpoint that distinguish it from perspectivalism, with which she claims it is often confused. It "intends to map the practices of power, the ways the dominant institutions and their conceptual frameworks create and maintain oppressive social relations. Secondly, it does this by locating, in a material and political disadvantage or form of oppression, a distinctive insight about how a hierarchical social structure works. . . . Third, the perspectives of the oppressed cannot be automatically privileged. . . . Finally, standpoint theory is more about the creation of groups' consciousness than about shifts in the consciousness of individuals" [2004b, 31-32]. If we understand standpoint in this way some, though perhaps not all, of the worries that have been generated by the approach are eliminated.²⁰

There is a second way that Hekman's analysis is off the mark. She claims that after the early 1990s interest in standpoint flagged, in part because of its association with the undesirable views noted above. Though it may be the case that there were not many new advocates for standpoint among philosophers, a number of sociologists continued to work in this tradition. Marjorie DeVault's *Liberating Method* [1999] and Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Michelle L. Yaiser's edited collection, *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research* [2004] address epistemological

¹⁹These critiques make compelling arguments against "straw women" and betray a misunderstanding of much of the more radical feminist science studies and frequently conflate feminist standpoint theories with postmodernists theories. See Pinnick, C., N. Koertge, and R. Almeder, *Scrutinizing Feminist Epistemology* [2003].

²⁰However, Harding claims that those controversies that are not are both good for standpoint and for philosophy of science more generally in that they bring an array of groups into conversation and bring into focus the ways in which philosophy of science can be socially relevant [2004b].

issues and feature philosophical engagement with feminist methodology prominently. Throughout the 1990s, there was a continuing discussion about feminist methodology, including, but not limited to, standpoint theory. So the idea that this is primarily an epistemological debate taking place among philosophers may have led Hekman astray in this regard. The vibrancy of the work in this area, the growing reflection on what it is about standpoint and other approaches that might be considered feminist, as well as the growing interdisciplinary interest in these discussions have been important factors in the revival of interest in standpoint among feminist philosophers.

In spite of these failings, Hekman does focus on the important issue of objectivity, although she is not original in doing so. As the discussion of standpoint or any other feminist methodology turns to epistemology, the primary question from the perspective of the philosophy of science is whether the sociology produced by these methods is good science or better science than sociology that does not use these methods. Finding a way to answer the question of what makes standpoint an improvement over “traditional” science still remains to be done. However, as Hekman and other have pointed out, without some standard of what counts as good science, without some criterion for making this judgment, this key feminist claim cannot amount to anything. So what can we say about whether standpoint offers an improvement in sociology and how can it be said? If the questions about standpoint can be relegated to methodology, something distinct from epistemology as Smith seems to hope, or if we can confine them to the logic of discovery then perhaps they will not need to be addressed. As I have already intimated however, such a defense would require the ability to distinguish the cognitive/epistemic from noncognitive/nonepistemic and how it is not straightforward how this can be achieved. In addition, there are reasons for believing that we may get a clearer picture of the practice of producing scientific knowledge if we do not cling to this distinction.

2.3 Objectivity

Two of the clearest attempts to address these are those of Sandra Harding and Alison Wylie. However, before I turn to their work, I want to clarify the question. Feminism is clearly political and so not value-free. To argue that a feminist science is a better science appears to challenge the idea that objectivity is a virtue for science, if we take the notion of objectivity to mean something like, value-free, impartial, unbiased, or free from political influence. So on the face of it, there is a conflict between the traditional conception of good science and the one proposed by feminism. It is possible of course that objectivity should just be abandoned as a goal and there are those that have claimed that this is what feminists are advocating. At least among feminist philosophers of science, there do not seem to be any who explicitly make this claim, but it is not surprising that this perception persists. Consider the following from *The Gender and Science Reader*: “Scientists, in general, believe that their work is beyond cultural or social influ-

ence – that they are discovering, rather than inventing, Nature. This perception has permeated the general population such that it is difficult to convince people that science is not objective truth. Moreover, it is the self-proclaimed ‘objectivity’ of science, along with its elitist, gendered and racist stances (whether overt, covert, or unintentional) that create friction with social studies of science. Scientists should become aware of analyses of their disciplines based on class and race” [Lederman and Bartsch, 2001, 2–3]. If objectivity of some sort is not a goal, then how are we to adjudicate competing claims about what counts as better science? In what sense can it be claimed that feminism improves science?²¹ Worse still, how do we evaluate the very basis of feminist theorizing? As Hekman puts it in relation to standpoint theory specifically, “Feminist standpoint theory raises a central and unavoidable question for feminist theory: How do we justify the truth of the feminist claim that women have been and are oppressed?” [2004, 226].

What objectivity is and how it might be threatened needs to be explored if we are to reconfigure, rehabilitate, or even reject an ideal of objectivity. Its ambiguity has been acknowledged and explored in several recent discussions on this issue. Elizabeth Lloyd [1995], Hugh Lacey [1999], Heather Douglas [2004], and Marianne Janack [2002] provide examples of some of the best attempts. Janack’s categorization of varieties of objectivity is one of the most complete and I have reproduce it here:

1. objectivity as value neutrality;
2. objectivity as lack of bias, with bias understood as including:
 - (a) personal attachment;
 - (b) political aims;
 - (c) ideological commitments;
 - (d) preferences;
 - (e) desires;
 - (f) interests;
 - (g) emotion.
3. objectivity as scientific method;
4. objectivity as rationality;
5. objectivity as an attitude of ‘psychological distance’;
6. objectivity as ‘world-directedness’;
7. objectivity as impersonality;

²¹It could be that the claim means no more than that it improves science *for women*, in the sense that it addresses those things that are important to them, but even this claim seems to be on shaky ground without a more robust concept of objectivity.

8. objectivity as impartiality;
9. objectivity as having to do with facts;
10. objectivity as having to do with things as they are in themselves; objectivity as universality;
11. objectivity as disinterestedness;
12. objectivity as commensurability;
13. objectivity as intersubjective agreement. [2002, 275]

Which of these is the ideal of objectivity that a commitment to feminist science, and consequently feminist sociology, challenges or does it challenge all of them in some way? Which are worth retaining and which not? How are they related to each other?

Notice that in Janack's list there are three main senses of objectivity having to do with 1) the attitude of the subject; 2) method; and 3) the relationship between the belief/knowledge/theory and the world. The sense having to do with the subject is spelled out in 2, 5, 7, 8, and 11.²² Only 3 is unambiguously methodological. The relationship between the world and the theory appears in 6, 9, 10, and 12, though arguably 6 can also be seen as descriptive of the subject and 12 might be commensurability among subjects and so more akin to 13. 13, intersubjectivity, is often used as an attempt to span all three senses of objectivity, for it can mean intersubjectivity about method or agreement about the world and possibly both. Finally, that these are all senses in which we use the term objectivity suggests that there is a relationship between them, that they all work together in some sense to produce *all* of what we mean by "objectivity".²³

For our purposes, the most important connections are between objectivity as value-neutrality, disinterestedness, and impartiality and objectivity as scientific method. It is the lack of value-neutrality, disinterestedness, or impartiality in method that worries critics of standpoint. So the crucial question in the context of the discussion of standpoint is whether or not it is possible to engage in a method that is partial, perspectival, particular and consequently, value laden and interested but which nonetheless produces objective knowledge. Can standpoint produce knowledge that can be judged "objectively" better than knowledge produced in other ways and if, so, how?

²²1 and 4 are ambiguous between subject and method. Is it that the knower is rational of that the method that is being used is a rational method? Typically it is both and this captures some of the ineliminable ambiguity in the term.

²³Though Douglas uses different categories, this is what she intends by her claim that the complexity of "objectivity" is irreducible.

2.4 Sandra Harding: strong objectivity

In her [1993] article “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is ‘Strong Objectivity’?” Sandra Harding elaborates the account of objectivity that she believes a feminist philosophy of science should employ. She calls it “strong objectivity”, and contrasts it with what she refers to as “objectivism”, a kind of objectivity that demands disinterestedness, impartiality, impersonality, and is value-free.²⁴ According to Harding, critics of standpoint theory “have assimilated standpoint claims either to objectivism or some kind of conventional foundationalism or to ethnocentrism, relativism, or phenomenological approaches in philosophy or the social sciences” [2004, 127].

The thinking has been that either one has a foundationalist epistemology that grounds our claims through some appropriate methodology and fundamental knowledge (empiricism, for instance) or we are pushed into some sort of relativism because of the dependence of our judgments on “subjective” elements like interests and values. The first horn of the dilemma spawns criticisms that identify standpoint as advocating the epistemic privilege of women (or other outsiders). The other horn abandons the possibility of knowledge with relativism leading to skepticism.

The only option would seem to be objectivism, the view that Harding identifies with a traditional account of objectivity. Objectivism is the idea that science must be objective in the sense relating to the subject and capture the nature of reality through a value-free or, at least, value-neutral methodology. The problem with objectivism is that it is insensitive to the reality that values inevitably play a role in science and does not enable us to distinguish when values play a positive role and when they do not. “Objectivists claim that objectivity requires the elimination of all social values and interests from the research process and the results of research. It is clear, however, that not all social values and interests have the same bad effects upon the results of research. Democracy-advancing values have systematically generated less partial and distorted beliefs than others” [2004, 137]. Harding proposes an alternative to objectivism, a version of objectivity that she calls “strong objectivity”. Strong objectivity requires that we determine which values and interests are less likely to distort beliefs, not that we purge our beliefs of values and interests, a task that would be impossible according to Harding.²⁵

Standpoint theories provide a means of improving on objectivism through providing strong objectivity. They do this by focusing on the subject as crucial to knowledge, explicitly identifying the subject and reflecting on the role the subject plays in knowledge production.

Strong objectivity requires that the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge. Thus

²⁴This account is first developed fully in her *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*

²⁵There seems to be a discrepancy between Harding’s account of strong objectivity which suggests that values should be incorporated as part of an epistemology, or account of justification in her [1991] book and the recent [2004b] article calling for a logic of discovery. I am not really sure how they are to be reconciled and I have not addressed that conflict here.

strong objectivity requires what we can think of as ‘strong reflexivity’. This is because culturewide (or nearly culturewide) beliefs function as evidence at every stage in scientific inquiry: in the selection of problems, the formation of hypotheses, the design of research, (including the organization of research communities), the collection of data, the interpretation and sorting of data, decisions about when to stop research, the way results of research are reported, and so on. [2004a, 136]

With that awareness, we can assess which communities of subjects and which values they hold produce better knowledge. Better knowledge comes not by eliminating the subjective (beliefs and values) altogether in order to conform to some false ideal of objectivism, but through examining whether understanding improves when these new viewpoints are incorporated. Harding makes it clear that it is not just the viewpoints of *some* women or *some* groups that are to be considered; she advocates for a *plurality* of standpoints. Though it is true that standpoint requires us to acknowledge a sort of relativism, the relativism is sociological; an acknowledgment of the differences in the ways that various groups see the world. However, the question of whether seeing the world from the perspective of one group rather than another enables them to achieve their goals and so gives a successful account of the world can be evaluated according to strong objectivity. As Harding puts it, “Standpoint theory provides arguments for the claims that some social situations are scientifically better than others as places from which to start off knowledge projects, and those arguments must be defeated if the charge of relativism is to gain plausibility” [2004a, 131].

Put differently, because the subjects are themselves so intimately a part of knowledge production, the means by which it comes about must itself be studied. “. . . [A] maximally critical study of scientists and their communities can be done only from the perspective of those whose lives have been marginalized by such communities. Thus strong objectivity requires that scientists and their communities be integrated into democracy-advancing projects for scientific and epistemological reasons as well as moral and political ones” [2004a, 136]. Strong objectivity not only requires, but generates standpoint.

Harding’s account of strong objectivity has not been widely embraced. For one thing, it raises as many questions as it sets out to solve. By what standards are we to determine which values are more conducive to good science than others? This is taken as obvious in Harding’s account, though she gives as her primary example that those values aligned with democratic ideals have been shown to result in better science than those that are not. There are few that would dispute this, nonetheless understanding why it is so is problematic. What is it about democratic values that leads to the greater success of a science that incorporates them? Other philosophers of science have attempted to answer this question. So, for instance, Helen Longino has claimed that an egalitarian society that supports discussion incorporating many diverse voices is more likely to produce good science than more closed societies. Though Harding neither gives a similar account, nor

explicitly endorses Longino's, it would seem that this is the sort of account that she has in mind. Another option is that we can think of scientific method as a sort of bootstrapping procedure, where we have standards by which we judge whether theories are good and when something doesn't work we revise both the belief judged and the standards by which we judge. These suggestions point toward a more complete account of strong objectivity, however they would need to be worked through to provide a satisfactory account.

2.5 Alison Wylie: rehabilitating objectivity

In a series of papers, beginning in the late 1990s, Alison Wylie has also grappled with the question of how to understand what is valuable in standpoint. Whereas Harding attempts to straddle the postmodernist/modernist divide, to have it "both ways", as she herself puts it, Wylie's understanding of standpoint connects it more directly with traditional standards of theory assessment in philosophy of science. She too seeks an account of objectivity that makes sense out of the successes of feminist methodology, and though she acknowledges that the concept is problematic rather than abandon it altogether she proposes a reconstruction. She argues that it "may be useful in showing what a standpoint theorist can claim about epistemic advantage without embracing essentialism or an automatic privilege thesis" [2004, 344-345].

Wylie notes that Hekman (among others) uses "objectivity" as a property of knowledge claims. This is objectivity as the relationship between belief, theory, or knowledge and the world. As already noted, this sense of objectivity is generally thought to be closely allied with, or perhaps dependent on objectivity in the sense of method. Wylie identifies a list of properties that are thought to be epistemic virtues indicative of the appropriate relationship between theory and the world. She justifies her list by noting that such properties are standard and agreed upon by "authors as diverse as Kuhn, Longino, Dupre, and Ereshefsky" (p. 345). The properties she is thinking of are empirical adequacy, explanatory power, internal coherence, consistency with other established bodies of knowledge, and perhaps some other virtues. She is not that concerned about precisely what virtues are on this list, and certainly that there might be disputes over one or more of the proposed properties and the degree to which it is important. But her point is that such a list could be compiled. She notes that empirical adequacy stands out from the others in that it appears on all such lists, though "empirical adequacy" is ambiguous as there are at least two ways in which it can be construed. It is either "fidelity to a rich body of localized evidence (empirical depth), or ... a capacity to 'travel' (Haraway) such that the claims in question can be extended to a range of domains or applications (empirical breadth)" (p. 345). I will return to the significance of this ambiguity.

The other sense of "objectivity" that is relevant to this discussion is objectivity as disinterestedness, impartiality, or lack of bias. As previously mentioned, it is these two senses of objectivity that seem to come into conflict most clearly when

one adopts standpoint theory as a methodology. Traditionally it is thought that objectivity of the first sort is to be achieved by objectivity of the second sort: we achieve objective knowledge by adopting objective approaches to the world, eliminating bias through the appropriate methodologies. Standpoint undercuts this conception of knowledge production.

Wylie notes that there is a *prima facie* conflict between standpoint and objectivity in the first sense, although this list of properties cannot all be maximized at the same time. Which of these properties we are likely to prefer and so choose to maximize is likely to be dependent upon our interests, purposes, intentions, and goals. Even with empirical adequacy, which seems to have some primacy in virtue of being on all lists, trade offs exist. The two senses of empirical adequacy, breadth and depth, frequently conflict and sometimes other properties will conflict with empirical adequacy.²⁶ Once we begin to think of objectivity as conforming to some aspects of this list of virtues, it is also clear that certain features on this list could be more useful to maximize than others depending on standpoint. In fact, we can see that standpoint might even become a factor in *increasing* objectivity by throwing light on the sorts of empirical adequacy, explanatory power, or other virtues that are relevant for a particular project.

With this analysis, Wylie discusses a variety of virtues that have been claimed for standpoint theory in relation to the possibility that they might increase a theory's success at achieving the epistemic virtues we identify with objectivity in the sense of "getting at the facts". So, for instance, standpoint theorists have claimed an epistemic advantage for those in positions of subordination. Among the advantages claimed are access to evidence, special inferential heuristics, interpretative and explanatory hypotheses that may not be available to others, and "critical dissociation from the taken-for-granted that underpin authoritative forms of knowledge" (p. 346). There is nothing automatic either about the epistemic advantages that might accrue to these disadvantaged groups, nor is there any assurance that the sorts of epistemic advantage that they have will increase the objectivity of science. That remains to be seen in specific instances after considering the purposes for which the knowledge is required. So Wylie affirms standpoint theory as a further resource for those who are engaged in science studies and attempting to understand the nature of scientific knowledge. She argues that by looking at objectivity as meeting some set of virtues from a standard list in addition to serving the goals of feminists, we can see why it is that standpoint might be able to contribute to this objectivity project.

What Wylie is saying about objectivity could be a version of Sandra Harding's strong objectivity. She agrees that the standards of objectivity should be applied to the methods and values shaping the scientific activity itself, but she disputes that we will get only one answer when we ask if the theory is good according to these criteria. One of her key insights is the importance of the interests and

²⁶For example, we use Newtonian physics which is less accurate rather than Einsteinian physics for many calculations because the less accurate but simpler calculations are pragmatically adequate.

the goals that we have in shaping what it is that we accept as knowledge. This approach is contextual and pragmatic. However it is also governed by agreed upon standards that are to be maximized in some combination and to some degree. Which standards should be maximized in this case and to what degree emerges as the knowledge project evolves.

Just as in Harding's work, we find ourselves faced with the question of the role of values in science. Wylie does not distinguish a context of discovery and a context of justification. The questions of justification are determined in the light of the contextual values, including those explicitly connected with the standpoint through which we are viewing the theory. These values do not determine directly whether the theory is one that we should accept, but they do determine which of the epistemic virtues are the most important for the current context. For Wylie the context of justification and the context of discovery merge (the justification always takes place within a context that also defines discovery). This is reminiscent of Longino's account of how contextual values play a role in the determination of evidence. One of the key differences is Wylie's examination of how standpoint can improve science by providing epistemic privilege (not automatic privilege but achieved privilege) and turning up evidence that might otherwise not be seen.

Both Harding and Wylie propose accounts of objectivity that provide a means of explaining how it is that standpoint might improve science and enrich our understanding of science. Both accounts require a kind of bootstrapping approach, where we sort out standards as we go based on success or failures that we have with our theories in particular situations. Wylie's account is more explicitly contextualized, however, there is no reason to think that Harding's views are in anyway inconsistent with this contextualization.

Wylie's account has two elements that pull against each other and each seems worrying. She starts with the "standard list" of epistemic virtues and so is using an empiricist approach, which, while comforting in its familiarity, is not unproblematic. Nearly all of the features on her list have been challenged at one time or another. Although she is not proposing necessary and sufficient conditions for choosing the best theory with these criteria, even the requirement that some, empirical adequacy, for instance, need to be met requires defense. It is also clear that empirical adequacy is not sufficient to produce a robust account of theory choice. Underdetermination arguments show this much at least. Furthermore, her account requires that we are able to distinguish the cognitive/epistemic from the non-cognitive/nonepistemic values, since the list of virtues is defined by what cognitive/epistemic properties are valued. In any given situation, it may be possible to do this; however, to give a generalized account is harder. Why should we treat these as epistemic values when it is so clear that they vary within the contexts? In what sense then are they to be identified as epistemic values?

The other criticism has to do with her inclusion of empirical adequacy on this list. Since she treats empirical adequacy as one of the epistemic virtues that will be used in theory choice, she does not single it out as having a different status than the others, except to note that it is the one that appears on everyone's list.

By allowing for the possibility that empirical adequacy is not to be a hallmark of *any* theory that is to be accepted she gives up a sense of objectivity that seems crucial to prevent relativism. The principles in each of these accounts maintain some notion of objectivity while at the same time being explicit about the ways in which values can legitimately enter into theory choice. But Harding's and Wylie's versions raise questions that motivate a further discussion of objectivity.

3 OBJECTIVITY: AN ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNT

Helen Longino has noted that the semantic view or the model-theoretic account of theories may provide resources for feminism.²⁷ I agree, but only so if the view makes use of its difference from traditional empiricist accounts. The account that I sketch below provides insight into the success of standpoint theory, as do Harding's and Wylie's, but also offers a notion of objectivity that permits feminists to make the sorts of claims about feminist science that they believe are warranted.

Thinking about science in terms of models is an approach that has been advocated by Patrick Suppes, Bas van Fraassen, Ron Giere, Nancy Cartwright, and Margaret Morrison, among others. Van Fraassen describes scientific theories as families of models [1980]. Cartwright claims that models don't represent but rather "models mediate between theory and the world" [1999, 179]. Giere calls models, "the primary representational entities in science" [1999, 5] and Peter Godfrey-Smith claims "a model is a structure (either abstract or concrete) that is used to represent some other system" [2003, 238]. I will use an understanding of "model" akin to that of Cartwright as a starting point, and I will not tackle the debate about representation head on at the moment. For Cartwright, when models represent, it is only one of the things they do and not necessarily the most important thing that we should be focused on. A model should be seen as a tool rather than a method of representation, so when it represents it does so in order to achieve some other aim, not as its primary goal.²⁸

The philosophers mentioned above also give different accounts of what sorts of entities models are. Giere has a very broad conception and one that works fairly well. A model can be a mathematical model, a physical scale model, a diagram, or even a conceptual model. In fact, there is probably not a good, non-trivial, general characterization that can be given of the concept, but what is interesting and useful is the analysis of specific models constructed for specific purposes.²⁹

²⁷In *The Fate of Knowledge* [2002], Longino advocates that we try a model-theoretic approach, but there is very little in the book that makes direct use of what I think the approach offers by way of resources for thinking about knowledge.

²⁸This is really an issue about the aims of science. I reject the idea that there is one uniform aim of science and that it is to describe the features of the world and that it does this through linguistic representation.

²⁹For instance, Cartwright, Morrison, and Morgan [1999] have been involved in a project to analyze economic models. Ursula Klein has looked at a change in the use of equations in chemistry and has treated these equations as models, or "paper tools". Another approach looks at computational models in chemistry and other sciences.

As Margaret Morrison puts it, models are useful for understanding the way that science works “because models have a rather hybrid nature (neither theory nor simple descriptions of the world)... they are able to mediate between the theory and the world and intervene in both domains” [1999, 44-45]. The model is a way of interacting with the world and thus knowing it. We adjust our models in response to the world (empirical phenomena) and we use our models to intervene in the world. Models are tools for knowing as well as being the way in which we know.

How do we get from models to a conception of objectivity that will rescue scientific knowledge from relativism and/or skepticism and yet still show how values, including feminist values, play an intrinsic role in science? The key to answering this question comes from thinking about what it is that models enable us to know. Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison offer the following observation: “All sciences must deal with this problem of selecting and constituting ‘working objects,’ as opposed to the too plentiful and too various natural objects” [1992, 85]. Daston and Galison similarly suggest a modeling of what they call the “working objects”, but what I will call the “objects of scientific knowledge”. In order to do science, we first need to make choices about what features of the multivarious natural world we are going to focus on and in doing this we “construct” the objects of scientific knowledge.³⁰

But what makes us pick out some features of the world as part of our scientific objects and ignore others? We pick characteristics that we think are going to enable us to answer the questions that we have before us at the time. These questions are expressions of our interests and it is through those interests that we emphasize or focus on certain aspects of the world rather than others. The question of whether the features that we are focusing on are the “right” ones is an empirical question. Are those the features that will allow us to construct models that give us answers to our questions, enable us to do what we want to do in the world, and successfully meet our goals? The construction of the model and the construction of the scientific objects proceeds in tandem and over time. We might chose certain features thinking that they are salient and discover that they are not and so revise our model. Our model might work until our interests shift and then we find that we need to rethink the objects. The use of interests in constructing models fits with standpoint theory. Standpoint calls for an explicit awareness of these interests as they are used in constructing our model of reality and legitimizes their role.³¹

³⁰This is not to say that we construct the world. The scientific objects are not isomorphic with objects in the world.

³¹Though this account bears some similarity to Giere’s “perspectival realism”, Giere gives a realist account of science using models. However, it is clear that there is nothing inherent in the model-theoretic approach that requires a commitment to realism. Van Fraassen uses the approach and is the arch anti-realist. I am depending on realism for what I want to say about objectivity.

3.1 *Values and interests*

What we value directs our actions or at least we try to get it to direct our actions. What does modeling have to do with values? Models are tools and tools are for some specific purpose. Modeling requires making choices about the natural world; we focus on the features of the natural world that we believe are salient to what we want. As a result, what we value is an integral part of the construction of the model. In this way, values are intrinsic to science and to our negotiating our way through the world in general. This is why it is so difficult to make a global distinction between epistemic/non-epistemic values, cognitive/non-cognitive values, or cognitive/constitutive values.³² If values enter into the very conception of objects, if they shape the “scientific object” of study, then they are not add-ons, or extra-scientific, social factors that enter into our judgments about which among many empirically adequate theories we ought to accept. They are an intrinsic part of knowledge production and need to be identified and examined as such.

This way of thinking about scientific knowledge provides a means of understanding what might be of value in a feminist standpoint approach, and explains the successes of this approach in sociology can be explained in terms of its conformity to this model of scientific knowledge. When Dorothy Smith advocates a sociology that is “for women”, the idea that the knowledge is a tool and serves the interests of someone is explicit. The model that she advocates we construct is a model of the social world in which features that contribute to maintaining the power relations that keep women in positions of subordination are highlighted.

3.2 *Objects, models, and values*

This model-based account would seem to entail a form of relativism; science relative to interest and goals. However, the account roots objectivity in values rather than seeking an account that is value-free. This is only possible if there are objective claims that can be made about values. There are some things that we as human beings *should* value because there is a fact of the matter of what enables us to flourish. There is a fact of the matter about what is good for us. Now what I mean by flourishing may, within a particular set of boundary conditions, have a wide variety of interpretations and possible instantiations, but it will have to meet certain minimal requirements. We need to have the basics to survive, for instance, food, shelter, human companionship. Minimally, when our models are constructed to fulfill those needs then our science is objective.³³

I am proposing that we turn the problem of science and values on its head. The question of objectivity has been presented as a question of how science can still

³²The latter is Longino’s distinction.

³³It will clearly have to be guided by some conception of what a good life is and there are problems here as at the moment, the only thing that I can think of in this regard is that we would have to have a conception of what makes the best *human* life and this is going to involve some judgments about what it is to be human. These issues are also matters of empirical investigation and continually open to reassessment. It isn’t clear in the end that some sort of fundamental relativism can be avoided but that is to be worked out.

manage to be objective if values enter into it. But values are objectively based in projects which will be better for human beings than others, allowing humans to achieve goals that are more tied to their well-being, health, and flourishing. That such projects will produce better science is a belief in these that motivates those who pursue feminism and other democratic ideals in the social sciences. This means that the question is not how science can be objective if values enter, but rather which values are the ones that will give us objectivity in this sense.

This way of thinking about objectivity has obvious implications for standpoint theory and feminism more generally. Feminist sociologists frequently describe their project as one that provides knowledge *for* women. The idea that knowledge is to serve specific goals, relative to the interests of particular groups is clearly present. Additionally, standpoint theorists direct us to understand the institutions and social relations that maintain subordinate groups in their positions. The call to examine these institutions from women's standpoint can be seen not only as a call to understand the way the social and political world has been constructed but to seek alternatives (that is alternative models of the social consistent with women's goals).

4 POSTMODERNISM AND METHODOLOGY

I have focused primarily on standpoint theory in sociology because it is has generated so much recent discussion. However, when Sandra Harding first proposed that there were three approaches to feminist philosophy of science, she identified standpoint as holding an "unstable position" between feminist empiricism and feminist postmodernism. Some of the early criticisms of standpoint, including the rejection of a universal woman, the concerns about essentialism, and the idea that a standpoint involves automatic epistemic privilege, merge with postmodernist criticism. Postmodernist critique in sociology and anthropology poses a challenge to objectivity, including the revisions to the traditional notions that were discussed in the previous section. The cultural relativism of anthropology when coupled with postmodernism challenges any understanding of objectivity, either in terms of method, subject, or relationship of account to the world. For this reason, a discussion of postmodernism provides a bridge to a discussion of feminist anthropology in the context of the issues that dominate this chapter.

There are two dominant and related issues with which feminist anthropologists are engaged. The first centers on methodology and it here that the concerns of feminist anthropologists overlaps with those of feminist sociologists. However, second issue in feminist anthropology raises issues that though present in feminist sociology have been more disruptive of feminist anthropology. The difficulties arise in relation to ethnography, postmodernism/poststructuralism, and relativism.

Questions of a feminist methodology in anthropology are often addressed more broadly as questions about a feminist methodology for the social sciences. So, for example, Maria Mies [1983] offers seven methodological postulates for feminist research, as well as nine strategies [1991] that respond to, extend, and deepen the

ideas in those postulates. Her primary concern however, is not the specifics of the postulates or strategies but to note that they stem from a “different understanding of science from the one we find in the dominant scientific paradigm. We initially called this alternative understanding ‘feminist’ because the political aim of our efforts is most clearly expressed in this term. This goal is the overcoming of women’s exploitation and oppression” [1991, 70]. She goes on to say specifically that feminist research is more concerned with transformation than with knowledge and seeks active emancipation rather than spectator knowledge [1983].³⁴ Shulamith Rheinharz [1992] offers ten themes for feminist research methods, but some of the most important shared features also have to do with political activism. Mies states it explicitly as one of her strategies. “When selecting a research topic or problem, we should ask how that research has potential to help women’s live and what information is necessary to have such impact” [1991, 101].

In many of these points feminist theory in anthropology resembles standpoint theory in sociology, but most importantly for the current discussion, feminist methodology in anthropology includes connections to and understanding of those that are studied in a way that suggests a rejection of the traditional ideal of “objective knowledge” altogether. Rheinharz notes that “Feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied (in interactive research)” [1992, 204]. The sorts of relations that Rheinharz has in mind are ones that blur “the distinction between the formal and personal relations” (p. 263). This might happen through developing personal friendships with those who are being studied, giving assistance, or participating in activist movements with them. All of these require having a particular rapport with those being studied.

The more extreme view on rapport sees it as a prerequisite for feminist research. “By achieving rapport, the feminist researcher reassures herself that she is treating the interviewee in a nonexploitative manner. Rapport thus validates the scholar as a feminist, as a researcher, and as a human being. It symbolizes her sisterhood, her interviewing skill, and her ethical standing” [1992, 265]. Rheinharz does not herself support such a position and worries that “[e]xpecting to achieve ‘rapport,’ a concept that remains undefined, it is possible that the researcher will block out other emotions and reactions to the people she is studying. She might even romanticize the women or see them in stereotypic ways, because of her focus on ‘achieving rapport.’ And if she does not ‘achieve rapport,’ she may forego the study altogether. In my view it would be unfortunate if we were to introduce self-imposed limits to our research possibilities because of the notion of rapport” [1992, 265-266].

Rheinharz’s reservations are shared by others. Leslie Bloom [1997] explores the difficulties she encounters when doing fieldwork and attempting to apply feminist methodology. In her eagerness to identify with her respondent, she made assumptions about their relationship based on their shared self-description as feminists

³⁴By this, I take it that she means “knowledge” as it might be defined by traditional epistemology. The question of whether there might be other ways of thinking of knowledge is addressed later.

and then was disturbed when unexpected difference emerged in the course of the research.³⁵ She identifies the difficulty this created for her in her failure to be fully committed to the tenets of feminist research, which direct the researcher to put herself on the same ‘critical plane’ as the respondent. She concludes, “While we may never eliminate the sense of being ‘locked in uneasy sisterhood’ when profound differences threaten to rupture the feminist research relationship, these powerful practices of feminist methodology may result in us using the discomfort as a catalyst and source of energy for feminist transformational praxis” [1997, 119]. In this particular case, the lesson that Bloom took away was a greater understanding of herself and the way in which her beliefs and presuppositions shaped her understanding of her respondent.

As feminist researchers have sought nonexploitative relationships with those that they study, they have used the resources of ethnography within their disciplinary tradition. In problematizing the relationship between social scientist and subject ethnography appears to have a *prima facie* affinity with feminist thought, at least this is what some have claimed [Stacey and Thorne, 1985]. However, the *prima facie* strength of anthropology as a model feminist social science has been challenged in a number of ways. Judith Stacey and Barrie Thorne [1985] admire feminist anthropology, in part, because of its stronger ethnographic tradition. They wonder why more feminist sociologists have not turned to this tradition as a methodological resource because of its seeming compatibility with feminist ideals. However, in 1988, Stacey writes “But now after two and half years of fieldwork experience, I am less sanguine and more focused on the difficult contradictions between feminist principles and ethnographic method I have encountered than on their compatibility”. She worries that “the ethnographic approach masks a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation. . . . Precisely because ethnographic research depends upon human relationship, engagement, and attachment, it places research subjects at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer. . . .” [1988, 22-23]. The very nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched that is supposed to provide a less exploitative approach creates a greater opportunity for exploitation. The closeness of the relationships both reveals and produces felt obligations that can create profound moral dilemmas for the researcher.³⁶

Stacey examines the ability of postmodernism to address these conflicts by using resources of the *new* ethnography. “As I understand it, the postmodern ethnographic solution to the anthropologist’s predicament is to fully acknowledge the limitations of ethnographic process and product and to reduce their claims. Like feminists, critical ethnographers eschew a detached stance of neutral observation, and they perceive their subjects as collaborators in a project the researcher can

³⁵The difference was over Zionism and was occasioned by the start of the first Iraq war. Bloom’s sympathies for Israel were challenged by her respondent’s anti-Zionist stance which Bloom identified as anti-Semitic.

³⁶Stacey gives specific examples of such dilemmas, for instance, a case in which a “research collaborator” requested that details of her history be left out of product of the research, the ethnographic account, thus comprising its “truth” [1988, 24].

never fully control. Moreover, they acknowledge the indispensably intrusive and unequal nature of their participation in the studied culture. . . . Finally, postmodern ethnographers, influenced by deconstructionist fashions, aim only for ‘Partial Truths’ . . .” [1988, 25].

While this may provide a diagnosis for the researchers’ moral unease, in the end Stacey is skeptical that postmodernism can provide an answer to the dilemmas that ethnography raises. It is better to acknowledge the problem, but the acknowledgment alone does not provide resources to solve the problem. “The postmodern strategy is an inadequate response to the ethical issues endemic to ethnographic process and product that I have encountered and described. It acknowledges, but does little to ameliorate the problems of intervention, triangulation, or inherently unequal reciprocity with informants; nor can it resolve the feminist reporting quandaries” [1988, 26].

As sociologists have turned to the new ethnography, anthropologists have cautioned that the alliance between postmodernism and feminism in anthropology is full of peril. In a widely cited [1989] article, Frances Mascia-Lees, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerino Cohen warn that anthropologists would do better to seek a model for self-reflexive work in feminism rather than turning to postmodernism or the new ethnography; they explicitly juxtapose feminism to postmodernism. In their critique of the latter, they note that many of the insights that postmodernists claim are already in the feminist literature, but not acknowledged by postmodernists. Furthermore, “[w]hile anthropology questioned the status of the participant-observer, it spoke from the position of the dominant and thus for the ‘other.’ Feminists speak from the position of the ‘other’” [1989, 11]. Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, Cohen also question the motives of anthropologists who turn to postmodernism, noting that Nancy Hartsock made a similar point. Why have anthropologists adopted the postmodernist turn away from truth just at a moment in history when “women and non-Western peoples have begun to speak for themselves” [1989, 15]? When the Other finds a voice, the power of such a voice is discounted.

Although it comes from a different quarter, the warning that Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen are issuing reflects the dilemma of the standpoint theorists discussed above. If anthropology embraces postmodernism with its rejection of “Truth”, it loses the ability to serve feminist (and other) goals. “Politically sensitive anthropologists should not be satisfied with exposing power relations in the ethnographic text, if that is indeed what the new ethnography accomplishes, but rather should work to overcome these relations” [1989, 33]. The importance of activism, the ability to do something in the world with what one learns and the vital role that plays for feminist anthropology depends on at least some pragmatic sense of “getting things right”. Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Cohen claim that this may be better accomplished from the perspective of the oppressed group.

The problems and dilemmas that arise from people studying other people have been examined in the language of postmodernism with its challenge to “metanarratives”. As Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson [1997] describe a postmodernism

that they attribute to Lyotard, a metanarrative is an overarching story that legitimates the knowledge-producing practices of the culture; the story purports to show that those practices lead to Truth. The ideal of objectivity in most of its meanings is part of that metanarrative. Given even this loose description, Harding's claim that standpoint is intermediate between postmodernism and empiricism can be made clearer. Standpoint is postmodern in that it challenges the modernist story about truth, objectivity, and scientific progress. Standpoint also calls for reflexivity, but this is a characteristic of all feminist social science to some degree or another. In addition, the versions of standpoint examined here are allied with feminist empiricism in its goal of improving science through feminist critique and so it embraces some elements of the modernist picture since such an assessment requires some standard of what counts as better and worse science. I have argued that there are options for such a standard that do not require reverting to a modernist or traditional epistemology, but there is another alternative, which would be to abandon the quest for such a standard altogether. The result would be embracing some form of relativism, but then on what grounds could feminism be advocated?

5 ANTHROPOLOGY, ETHNOLOGY, AND POSTMODERNISM

The relationship between postmodernism, feminism, and anthropology is a complex and debated one. There are debates about the compatibility of postmodernism and feminism ([Mascia-Lees *et al.*, 1991]; [Kirby, 1991]) and consequently the possibility of a feminist anthropology ([Strathern, 1987]; [Walter, 1995]). The strong influence of postmodernism and the seriousness with which cultural and social anthropology have treated the postmodernist critique create challenges for feminist anthropology in a number of ways some of which have already been mentioned. For instance, feminist anthropology as it strengthened in the 1970s relied heavily on Sherry Ortner's thesis of universal subordination of women and gender asymmetry. Such universalism is inimical to postmodernism. In addition, the sex/gender distinction has played a crucial role in these debates. As mentioned earlier, the idea that sex and gender could be distinguished and that while sex was biological, gender was cultural, was taken as defining of an area of study for feminist sociologists particularly, since their area of study was the social and not the biological. The postmodernist idea that sex, no less than gender, is socially constructed would seem to undercut this presumption. If gender and sex are not distinct and sex is a cultural category as well much of the groundwork of feminist anthropology needs to be rethought.

As we have seen, standpoint has also been used in feminist anthropology, either explicitly or implicitly. Yet it occupies an intermediate position between postmodernism and empiricism in feminist sociological theorizing, its epistemological allegiance in feminist anthropology is less clear. On the one hand, standpoint justifies a path into the world of the research subject (insider) but at the same time demands that the subject speak for herself (since the researcher is an out-

sider). The legitimacy of the insider/outsider report is challenged because there is no ground on which it can be authoritative. On the other hand, one means of addressing this problem is to create “rapport”. The researcher understands the research subject because she identifies with her *as a woman*. This identification is reinforced by the theoretical justification of standpoint theory. But this depends on an assumed sameness of the researcher and the subject. So identification of researchers with subjects provides a pull towards universalism and away from the particular [Visweswaran, 1997].

Visweswaran [1997] suggests that the reliance on some of the features of feminist methodology discussed above, combined with the dominance of ethnography, have rested on an unexamined use of the notion of woman and gender. “[F]eminist ethnographers have been largely unresponsive to feminist challenges to gender essentialism, relying on gender standpoint theory, which erases difference through the logic of identification” [1997, 616]. Lynn Walter puts the point more generally, highlighting the tension between the goals of feminism and the tradition of anthropology. Anthropology operates with the assumption “that culture is the collective representations of a society, both understood as totalities. Difference is circumscribed within the boundaries of culture. . . . Conversely, feminist anthropology. . . disputes the coherence of culture in society by pointing to the alternative, subversive, and radical challenges in constructions of them”. In addition, anthropologists assume that they “can authoritatively represent the other culture because, as outsiders, they have no special interest in the outcome of the communicative practice of that community” [1995, 278]. But this is not the case for feminists as they do have special interests in the outcomes of gender struggles. Put in the language of standpoint, they are not outsiders strictly speaking but rather outsider/insiders.

Vicki Kirby [1991; 1993] defends the postmodernism critique more strenuously arguing that feminist anthropologists need to confront the tendency of anthropology to cling to one of its most basic assumptions, the belief that is “something ultimately recuperable and knowable” [1993, 127]. She claims that feminist repress or sanitize the question of difference, reducing the issue to plurality. In so doing, she believes they are aligning themselves with the discipline of anthropology and thus alienating themselves from (interdisciplinary) feminism more generally. She calls for feminist anthropologist to grapple with the ambiguities that they are faced with in represented Others and not assume a unity of women. “In other words, although feminists are loosely bound under the collective banner of a political movement, we are also *divided* from each other. We are differently located within these global narratives that translate, and very often efface, the material specificity of the perspective that *must* separate us. Hence the need to reconceptualize difference differently, so that ‘otherness’ is more subtly nuanced and the political terrain of its identity reinscribed” [1991, 129]. She proposes no formula for doing so, however and is critical of even those who she admires as they do attempt to grapple with these issues, claiming, for instance, that Donna Haraway does not recognize her own use of “othering” in her accounts and so falls back into the traditionalist trap. She claims Haraway’s belief “that feminism should

be judged a politically preferable discourse because it can escape the violence of representational dichotomies is itself an unwitting reiteration of a developmentalist and essentialising logic" [1991, 129]. So she exhorts feminist anthropologists to embrace feminist postmodernism and at the same time rejects the legitimacy of any claim that it is a superior discourse.

Kirby's diagnosis of the issue of difference and the rejection of any form of objectivity or judgment about correctness of accounts is clearly problematic. It is not clear how ambiguity can serve as a basis of political action, and yet, she recognizes quite clearly that in choosing representations through which we make decisions to act requires taking some viewpoint and privileging it over another. Is it possible to take the insights of the postmodernist critique and construct a feminist anthropology? Again, some account of objectivity would seem crucial, not only to feminist anthropology but to address the postmodernist critique of anthropology more generally.

There have been feminist anthropologists who have addressed the problem of essentialism and difference while attempting to remain sympathetic to postmodernism. Elizabeth Enslin [1994] bemoans the dominance of ethnography in feminist anthropology and offers a more fine-tuned approach to the question of identity. She advocates Haraway's notion of 'objectivity' based on partial connection and considers some specific examples of insider/outsider ethnography that focus on the marginality of the researcher as a tool for better understanding the relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor [1994, 549]. Her invocation of Haraway includes the use of the notion of 'situated knowledge'. "Situated knowledge is not a new form of individualism, relativism, or identity politics whereby one can argue any position based on one's sexual, ethnic, national, or economic location. On the contrary, it is knowledge gained from 'feminist objectivity' that is situated rather than detached" [1994, 555]. The partial and situated knowledge that Enslin advocates is best understood in relation to practice. It is knowledge "for, by, and about" women in the sense that it enables them to accomplish the goals that they have at a particular time and place. There are samenesses that allow identification and recognition of these goals, but whether or not the accounts that are offered by the feminist anthropologists work or not is a matter of fact. They are samenesses but not universals. So for Enslin, these are the choices that the anthropologist must make: the connections between researcher and researched are not given by any universals but are the result of conscious decisions based on grappling with one's own identity as a researcher.

5.1 Feminist anthropology?

Enslin's struggle to articulate some form of objectivity together with Kirby's postmodern push away from legitimatizing any knowledge claims provide a snapshot or endpoints of what seems to be a dead end in the discussion. Are feminism and postmodernism compatible? If not, then as long as anthropology is postmodernist, feminism has no home there. But the debate about feminism and postmodernism

is not resolved and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to attempt to resolve that issue. However, I have taken a stand in that debate in the previous section and have suggested an account of science that is sensitive to some of the insights of postmodernism can be compatible with and even useful for feminism. Whether such an account, or either of the other accounts of objectivity explored (Harding's or Wylie's) would provide a greater understanding of feminist anthropology remains to be seen and in particular whether it could address the issues posed by ethnographic research: the problematic relationship of the social scientist to subject.

It is also worth exploring the nature of the postmodernist critique of anthropology and the question of to what extent feminism should be allied with that trend in anthropology. Medford Spiro [1996] notes that there are postmodernists who argue that anthropology should not be considered a science. If that were the case then further discussion of the discipline in the context of feminist philosophy of science would be pointless. Spiro rejects this claim, on fairly traditional modernist grounds and the claim could be rejected within the framework of a philosophy of science that is sensitive to the interplay of values and science as well. Again, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to solve the question of scientific status of anthropology or the worth of postmodernism, although I believe that anthropology has a claim to status as a science and that there are elements in postmodernist critique that are valuable.

The literature on feminist anthropology is thin after the mid-nineties. The anthropology/feminism/postmodernism debate that I have focused on seems to have reached an impasse at that time. Feminism appears more clearly in applied anthropology and what has been called "advocacy anthropology". But theorizing feminism in anthropology seems at a standstill, with many of those engaged in the debate having moved to other topics. Whereas the conceptualization of standpoint in sociology enabled substantial discussion of its epistemological status, the strength of postmodernism in anthropology problematized the relationship between the researcher and the subject in a way that made the use of standpoint theory in feminist anthropology difficult.

Feminist anthropology as advocacy or applied anthropology offered a venue for feminist activism, however, it also holds promise from a revitalization of epistemological discussion. The activist projects that these approaches generate provide an arena for a more pragmatic approach to knowledge, such as the model-theoretic approach sketched above. An examination of how anthropological accounts have been used to support feminist causes could provide a means for getting clearer on how such accounts grow out of the interests of those for which the knowledge is produced. For instance, I would urge an examination of Diane Bell's *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin: A World that is, was, and will be* [1998] as she engages both in applied anthropology and ethnography and discusses what she is doing as she shifts from one to the other. As a result she grapples with some of the issues that have been discussed in the context of trying to produce knowledge for a particular purpose. The book is an account of her experience as an anthropological expert

for the Ngarrindjeri who sought to prevent the building of a bridge on the grounds that it would destroy a sacred women's site. The developers argued that this was a fabrication and the book chronicles their failure to prevent the building of the bridge but also the way the dispute over the question of the fabrication of the story unfolds. An account like this provides an opportunity to examine the interplay back and forth between theory and experience as the "model" is constructed.

Bell's work has been controversial, as has much advocacy anthropology. Some of this controversy is generated by the false ideal of science as value-free and I would advocate approaching it through one or more of the alternatives that has been suggested in the discussion of standpoint theory. Once we acknowledge that values play a role in science in the ways that feminist concerned with epistemological issues have claimed, then the specific investigation of how they play that role and an evaluation of how the science is shaped in any particular situation is not only warranted but also required if we are to understand social scientific practice.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Feminist sociology and anthropology provide rich areas of further study for those interested in key questions in philosophy of social science. The debates that are occurring here could have ramifications for an account of science in a more general way. First, feminists are grappling with questions of the role of values in science as the debates over standpoint clearly show. It is generally acknowledged that values do play a role in science and the way in which this happens and how we can still argue that science is objective in some relevant sense remains a key point of discussion. Feminists are grappling directly with these issues. Further, feminists are in the forefront of investigating the relationship between the knower and the known, a central theme in the anthropological literature. This literature reveals a continuing division over the value of postmodernism, standpoint theory, and feminism more generally. While it is sometimes claimed that these debates say nothing new and are not particularly *feminist*, feminist philosophers of science are among those seeking to clarify these two central debates in the social sciences and have made substantial contributions to the understanding of values in science and what this means about the objectivity of science.

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