

## Feminist Epistemology and Pragmatic Encroachment

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**Abstract** Pragmatic encroachers argue that whether you know that  $p$  depends on a combination of pragmatic and epistemic factors. Most defenses of pragmatic encroachment focus on a particular pragmatic factor: how much is at stake for an individual. This raises a question: are there reasons for thinking that knowledge depends on other pragmatic factors that parallel the reasons for thinking that knowledge depends on the stakes? In this paper I argue that there are parallel reasons for thinking that knowledge depends on social factors such as one's social role or identity. I call this social encroachment. After defending social encroachment, I compare and contrast social encroachment with some key ideas in feminist epistemology. I argue that, while there are some important similarities, there are also some important differences. I finish by commenting on what I take the upshots of these differences to be.

### 1. Introductory Remarks

Some have argued that whether you know that  $p$  depends on a combination of pragmatic and epistemic factors (Fantl and McGrath 2009; Hawthorne 2004; Grimm 2011; Stanley 2005; Weatherson 2012).<sup>i</sup> These 'pragmatic encroachers' tend to focus on a particular pragmatic factor: how much is at stake for an individual. The idea is that, the higher the stakes are for you—the more important it is that you be right—the more evidence you need in order to know. I will call this 'stakes encroachment'. In my view, there is reason to think that knowledge depends on pragmatic factors other than stakes. In particular, there is reason to think that knowledge depends on social factors such as:

- The subject's social role.
- The subject's social identity.
- The risk of social injustice.

I will call this 'social encroachment'.<sup>ii</sup> This paper has two parts. In the first part (§§2-4), I will argue for social encroachment, and clarify the sort of 'social dependence' of knowledge it involves. In the second part (§5), I will clarify the relationship between social encroachment and a key idea in feminist epistemologies.<sup>iii</sup> At the core of most feminist epistemologies is the idea that the social locations of inquirers make for epistemic differences. One finds this idea in both feminist standpoint theory (Collins 2000, 1986; Harding 1991; Hartsock 1983; Medina 2012; Wylie 2003) and feminist empiricism (E. Anderson 2004, 1995b, 1995a; Longino 1997, 1994; Nelson 1990).<sup>iv</sup> Drawing on Ashton and McKenna (forthcoming), I argue that, while some strands in both feminist standpoint theory and feminist empiricism involve something akin to social encroachment, others don't. This difference corresponds to a difference between two senses in which whether one knows might depend on social factors. Some strands in feminist epistemology are merely committed to social factors playing an enabling role in the production of knowledge; other strands are committed to social factors also playing a role in justifying our beliefs. I finish by outlining how the debate

about pragmatic encroachment could be enriched by incorporating insights from feminist epistemology.

## 2. The Argument from Cases

The first argument for social encroachment is based on cases that purport to show that knowledge depends on a combination of pragmatic and epistemic factors. Such arguments have a common structure. The reader is presented with two cases. The cases differ with respect to some pragmatic factor, but are identical with respect to relevant epistemic factors. If it can be shown that there is knowledge in one case but not in other, knowledge must depend on the relevant pragmatic factor. Here are the cases.

### *Variation of Social Role*

Case 1: Mr. Mulder, who has a keen interest in medicine but is not a medical doctor, reads an article in a reputable newspaper that says that a new drug is safe. He has no reason to think that this information is misleading, and good reason to trust this newspaper as it has a good track record when it comes to advances in medical science. Assume that the drug is in fact safe.

Case 2: Dr. Scully, who is a practicing medical doctor, reads the same article. She also has no reason to think this information is misleading in any way, and good reason to trust this newspaper.<sup>v</sup>

Intuitively, while Mulder has done all he needs in order to know that the new drug is safe, Scully has to do more. The thought is that it is enough for a layperson to read about medical advances in a (reputable) newspaper, but a practicing doctor needs to do more. Mulder and Scully's different social roles impose different epistemological requirements when it comes to how they should go about forming beliefs about whether drugs are safe. Mulder can trust the newspaper, whereas Scully needs to check the relevant medical journal articles. If this is right, whether one knows depends on one's social role.

### *Variation of Social Identity*

Case 1: Pam is a manual worker who has good reason to believe that her co-workers are being exploited, though she lacks conclusive proof. She is wondering whether to act on her belief by creating a union. Let's suppose that, if the bosses are taking advantage of the workers, she will be successful in convincing them to join the union, and, if the bosses are not taking advantage of the workers, she will be unsuccessful. Let's also suppose that, because of her position in the company and her gender, Pam faces serious barriers to creating a union: she fears she won't be taken seriously, either by her bosses or her co-workers; she worries that this will get her a reputation as a trouble-maker; etc.

Case 2: Jim also has good reason to believe that the workers are being exploited, and is wondering whether to act on his belief. But, because he is male and a manager in the company, he faces fewer barriers to creating a union; he knows he will be taken seriously; he is confident that this will not get him a reputation as a trouble-maker; etc.

In my (and Jason Stanley's<sup>vi</sup>) view it is (to put it crudely) easier for Jim to know that his workers are being exploited than it is for Pam. The thought is that Pam's social identity creates barriers to her knowing that don't exist for Jim. Because of her precarious position in the company and her gender, she just needs more evidence than Jim does. If this is right, whether one knows depends on one's social identity.

### *Variation of Risk of Social Injustice*

Case 1: Bob is taking a walk in the forest and hears a noise that could only have come from a large animal. He remembers hearing that the only large animal in this forest is a grizzly bear, but he has no other evidence to back this up. He forms the belief that the animal is a bear.

Case 2: Bob is visiting the local branch office and encounters a female employee, Linda. He remembers hearing that all the women who work in this branch office are administrative assistant, but he has no other evidence to back this up. He forms the belief that the Linda is an administrative assistant.<sup>vii</sup>

It is plausible that Bob knows that the animal is a bear. Or, at least, it is plausible if we accept that one can have what Jennifer Lackey (2011) calls 'isolated second-hand knowledge', that is, knowledge gained from testimony (second-hand) where one has no other relevant knowledge about the matter (isolated). But I would suggest that it is far less plausible that he knows that Linda is an administrative assistant. We (I take it) want to say that Bob should not believe that Linda is an administrative assistant on the basis of merely statistical evidence. But the only relevant difference between these cases is what one might call the risk that Bob's belief will cause social injustice. In forming a belief about the identity of the animal there is no risk of Bob perpetrating a social injustice. In forming a belief about Linda's job there is such a risk. If this is right, whether one knows depends on the risk of causing social injustice.<sup>viii</sup>

I want to finish this section by emphasizing that, while the argument from cases provides some motivation for social encroachment, I don't think it is decisive. It relies on certain intuitions that may not be widely shared, and even if they are shared, there are other ways of accommodating them.<sup>ix</sup> However, my aim in this section (and in this paper) is not to show that social encroachment is *ultima facie* plausible. It is rather to show that, just as there is reason for thinking that knowledge depends on the stakes, there is also reason to think that knowledge depends on social factors.

### **3. The Argument from Knowledge-Action Principles**

The starting point of the second argument is the claim that there is a conceptual connection between what one knows and what one may treat as a reason for acting. Take this principle:

PR: S may treat  $p$  as a reason for acting iff S knows that  $p$ .<sup>x</sup>

The usual argument for principles like PR is that it is supported by ordinary evaluations of the rationality of practical reasoning. For instance, if I turn left on the way to the airport I can justify having done so by saying that I know the airport is in this direction. On the other hand, if I turn left on the way to the airport without knowing that the airport is in this direction, you can criticize me by saying that I do not know that the airport is in this direction. This practice seems to only

make sense if a principle like PR is true. What PR tells us is that, if you know that  $p$ , there is no ‘epistemic barrier’ to treating  $p$  as a reason for acting. This is not to say that there is no barrier at all;  $p$  may be irrelevant to the planned action.<sup>xi</sup>

Pragmatic encroachers have used PR to argue that knowledge depends on the stakes. Abstracting away from some complications, the argument is simple:

1. Whether S may treat  $p$  as a reason for acting depends on the stakes.
2. PR
3. Whether S knows that  $p$  depends on the stakes.

One can construct a structurally identical argument for social encroachment:

1. Whether S may treat  $p$  as a reason for acting depends on social factors.
2. PR
3. Whether S knows that  $p$  depends on social factors.

To illustrate how this argument works, consider the cases discussed earlier.

Mulder may permissibly treat the proposition that the drug is safe as a reason for acting (e.g. telling a friend about it), whereas Scully cannot permissibly treat this proposition as a reason for acting. If Mulder were to treat this proposition as a reason for telling a friend about the drug he would be behaving like a good friend, taking an active interest in others’ well-being. If Scully were to treat this proposition as a reason for telling a friend about the drug, she would be in dereliction of her professional responsibilities. But the only difference between them is their social role. So whether one may permissibly treat something as a reason for acting depends on one’s social role. Thus, if PR is true, whether one knows depends on one’s social role.

Or take Pam and Jim. Jim may permissibly treat the proposition that the workers are being exploited as a reason for acting (e.g. creating a union), whereas Pam cannot permissibly treat this proposition as a reason for acting. If Jim were to treat this proposition as a reason for creating a union he would be behaving like a model manager, taking an interest in the welfare of his workers. If Pam were to treat this proposition as a reason for creating a union she would be taking a big risk. But the only difference between them is their social identity—Pam is a woman and employed as a manual laborer, whereas Jim is a man and is middle-management. Whether one may permissibly treat something as a reason for acting depends on one’s social identity. Thus, if PR is true, whether one knows depends on one’s social identity.

Finally, take Bob. It is plausible that Bob may permissibly treat the proposition that the animal is a bear as a reason for acting (e.g. running away), whereas he may not permissibly treat the proposition that Linda is an administrative assistant as a reason for acting (e.g. handing her his expenses form). If Bob were to treat this proposition as a reason for handing her his form, he would run the risk of causing terrible social injustices. Thus, if PR is true, knowledge depends on the risk of causing social injustice.

Before moving on, I want to address two objections.

First, one might object that, if Pam were to try to create a union, she would be going above and beyond the call of duty. While supererogatory acts are not required, they are permissible. I agree, but this is no objection to my argument. What is at issue is whether there are epistemic barriers to Pam's treating the proposition that her co-workers are being exploited as a reason for creating a union, not whether she is permitted to try and create a union. My claim is that there are such barriers. Given their respective positions in the company, Pam just needs more evidence than Jim before she can rationally treat her belief that the workers are being exploited as a reason to create a union. If this is right, it tells us something important about why many societies are highly resistant to social change. Social change often requires people to act irrationally, that is, to act on evidence that is insufficient given the situation they find themselves in. Part of Pam's problem is that bringing about the social change she wants requires her to act on evidence that is insufficient. If social change requires going against rationality, it is no surprise that it can be so difficult to enact.<sup>xii</sup>

Second, one might object that I have drawn general conclusions from three cases. But these cases call our attention to a more general phenomenon. Our social roles, social identities and the risk of bringing about social injustice partly determine our responsibilities as inquirers. Doctors have responsibilities that laypeople lack. Because of these responsibilities, they are required to do things that laypeople aren't, like investigate claims about the safety of new drugs for themselves, before they can rationally act. Those who occupy social identities that are oppressed along some dimension have additional responsibilities that those who are privileged along that dimension lack. Pam needs to gather more evidence before she can rationally act, whereas Jim doesn't. Part of Pam's predicament is that bringing about the social change she wants requires not fulfilling these responsibilities.<sup>xiii</sup> Finally, when deciding what to believe, we have a responsibility to take the social consequences of our beliefs into account. There are reasons for not acting on testimony when it might perpetuate social injustice that are not reasons for not relying on testimony in general.

Like the argument from cases, the argument from knowledge-action principles provides some motivation for social encroachment, but I do not think it is decisive. The argument relies on PR, and many have rejected such principles.<sup>xiv</sup> But, again, I am arguing that, just as there is reason to take stakes encroachment seriously, there is also reason to take social encroachment seriously. I take the two arguments I have offered to establish this relatively modest claim.

#### **4. Social and Pragmatic Encroachment**

This completes my defense of social encroachment. In this section I will address two issues. First, what is the relationship between social and stakes encroachment? One might think that social encroachment is just a version of stakes encroachment. I will suggest some reasons for resisting this conclusion. Second, if social encroachment is true, knowledge depends on social factors. But 'depends' in what sense? As we will see, this issue is important when comparing social encroachment with feminist epistemologies.

In presenting the case for social encroachment, I glossed over an important issue. Is social encroachment just an *instance* of stakes encroachment? That is, does knowledge depend on social factors just because the stakes can depend on social factors? Before suggesting that the answer is 'no', I want to highlight that achieving my aims in this paper doesn't require that social

encroachment is anything more than an instance of stakes encroachment. My focus on social encroachment is justified by the fact that it facilitates drawing a connection with feminist epistemologies, which tend to talk in terms of social factors but not in terms of stakes.

Now let me explain why I think that social encroachment is more than an instance of stakes encroachment. I agree that it isn't a simple task to 'isolate' social encroachment from stakes encroachment. The social factors I focus on are all aspects of a subject's social location (where they are positioned in society) and it is difficult to separate the stakes for a subject from that subject's social location. But, while it is important to be mindful of this issue, it isn't an insurmountable problem. I think I can show that social factors drive the requirements on knowledge up (or down) independently of the stakes. Thus, the cases illustrate that knowledge depends on social factors, independently of any dependence on stakes.

We can start with the first case. On the picture I'm working with, our social roles impose different responsibilities on us as inquirers irrespective of whether we are presently (or will soon be) in a high or a low stakes situation. Maybe it is even harder for Scully to know that the drug is safe if it is a drug that she is going to have to decide whether to prescribe than it would be if she is unlikely to need to prescribe the drug. But this just shows that social and stakes encroachment can work together to drive up the requirements for knowledge, not that stakes encroachment 'drives' social encroachment.

What about the second case? One might object that, even if it is easier for Jim to know than it is for Pam, this is better analyzed in terms of a difference in stakes than in terms of a difference in their social identity. While it is hard to construe the case in such a way that stakes play no role (see above), there is a problem with this objection. If it is a difference in stakes that is driving intuitions then our intuitions should change if we vary the stakes but keep the social identities fixed. Imagine that for Jim the welfare of his workers is of utmost importance, whereas for Pam the welfare of her co-workers is only important as a small part of a larger struggle against the ruling class. Still, Pam faces barriers to knowing that the workers are being exploited that just don't exist for Jim. It is these barriers that cause the problem for Pam, and these barriers may exist even though Pam doesn't regard it as imperative that she circumvent them. So the objection fails, because varying the stakes doesn't change the intuitions.

Finally, it is perhaps easier to isolate social encroachment from stakes encroachment in the third case. Insofar as we have the intuition that Bob knows that the animal is a bear in case 1, but does not know that Linda is an administrative assistant in case 2, this has nothing to do with the importance for Bob of him being right. The point is that it is impermissible for Bob to believe that Linda is an administrative assistant because of the risk of causing a social injustice. This risk exists whether Bob cares about causing a social injustice or not. Imagine that Bob is entirely indifferent about perpetuating social injustices. It's all the same to him whether he does or not. There isn't anything 'at stake' for Bob in getting Linda's job wrong, but nevertheless it still seems that he isn't permitted to believe that Linda is an administrative assistant. So, even if the first two cases fail to make the case for social encroachment independently of stakes encroachment, the third case can still do the job.

Turning now to the second issue, social encroachers say that knowledge depends on social factors. But ‘depends’ in what sense? We can draw a distinction between two ways in which some property or status F might depend on social factors. Here is Paul Boghossian drawing this distinction in the case of knowledge:

No one should deny, for example, that knowledge is often produced collaboratively, by members of a social group, and that contingent facts about that group may explain why it shows an interest in certain questions over others ... [M]embers of a knowledge-seeking group may have certain political and social values and that those values *may* influence how they conduct their work—what observations they make and how well they appraise the evidence that they encounter ... [W]hat *is* independent of our social make-up is the fact that the fossil record we have discovered constitutes *evidence* for the existence of dinosaurs—contributes to making it rational, in other words, to believe in their existence. That we should have discovered the evidence for the dinosaurs may not be independent of our social context; but *that it is evidence* for that hypothesis is (Boghossian 2006, 21–22).

Following Boghossian, let’s say that whether S knows that *p* *causally* depends on social factors iff social factors are an important part of the causal explanation how S came to know (or not know) that *p*, whereas whether S knows that *p* *constitutively* depends on social factors iff S knows (or does not know) that *p* partly in virtue of social factors. The idea behind this distinction is that there are two ways in which whether one knows can depend on some factor F. The first way is causal: F might be part of a causal explanation how you came to know (or not know). Boghossian accepts that social factors can play this causal role (your social and political values may impact on the evidence you have and your appraisal of it). The second way is metaphysical: it might be that one knows (or does not) that *p* in virtue of F, because whether one’s evidence is sufficient for knowledge depends on F (or because whether the information counts as evidence at all depends on F). Boghossian denies that whether you know depends on social factors in this way.<sup>xv</sup>

I think it is clear that, according to any version of pragmatic encroachment, whether you know that *p* constitutively depends on certain pragmatic factors.<sup>xvi</sup> It is no surprise to learn that pragmatic factors have a causal impact on what we know: if you don’t care to inquire into something, then you’ll know very little about it. Pragmatic encroachment—whether in its stakes or social variety—is the far more controversial view that pragmatic factors (partly) determine how much (or what sort of) evidence we need in order to know. On one way of thinking about stakes encroachment (suggested by Grimm 2011), whether you know constitutively depends on how much is at stake for you because how much is at stake (partly) determines whether your evidence is sufficient for you to know. Paralleling the suggested way of thinking about stakes encroachment, we can say that whether you know constitutively depends on social factors because social factors (partly) determine whether your evidence is sufficient for you to know. Using our cases to illustrate, Scully and Pam don’t know because their social roles and identities impose responsibilities on them that they haven’t met, and Bob doesn’t know that Linda is an administrative assistant because the risk

of social harm renders his statistical evidence inappropriate. These social factors don't cause Scully, Pam and Bob to lack knowledge. They lack knowledge partly in virtue of them.

This completes my discussion of the similarities and differences between stakes and social encroachment. I now want to turn to the connection between social encroachment and feminist epistemologies.

## 5. The Situated Knowledge Thesis

At the core of most feminist epistemologies is the situated knowledge thesis: the social locations of knowers are epistemologically relevant. I want to focus on two questions about the situated knowledge thesis:

1. What is the scope of the situated knowledge thesis? That is, is the claim that all knowledge is socially situated (the social locations of knowers are always epistemologically relevant), or is the claim more restricted (the social locations of knowers are sometimes epistemologically relevant)?
2. Does the situated knowledge thesis posit causal or constitutive dependence of knowledge on social factors?

Answering these questions will allow us to explore the connections between social encroachment and feminist epistemologies.

Let's start with the first question. In her excellent overview of feminist epistemology, Elizabeth Anderson says this:

Mainstream epistemology takes as paradigms of knowledge simple propositional knowledge about matters in principle equally accessible to anyone with basic cognitive and sensory apparatus: '2 + 2=4'; 'grass is green'; 'water quenches thirst.' Feminist epistemology does not claim that such knowledge is gendered. Examination of such examples is not particularly helpful for answering the epistemological problems that arise specifically in feminist theory and practice. What is it to know that I am a woman? What is it like to be sexually objectified? Why is it that men and women so often have dramatically divergent understandings of what happened in their sexual encounters? How can we arrange scientific practices so that science and technology serve women's interests? These kinds of questions make other kinds of knowledge salient for feminist epistemology: phenomenological knowledge, *de se* knowledge, knowledge of persons, know-how, moral knowledge, knowledge informed by emotions, attitudes, and interests (E. Anderson 2017).

Anderson is drawing on work in both the feminist standpoint theory tradition and the feminist empiricist tradition here. Feminist standpoint theorists think that those who are oppressed (along some dimension) have an epistemic advantage over those who are relatively privileged (along that dimension). This advantage is only supposed to be with respect to certain phenomena, paradigmatically, social relations (Collins 1986; Harding 1991, 46; Fricker 1999, 203; Wylie 2003, 37). For instance, Patricia Hill Collins (1986) argues that black women have an epistemic advantage over white men with respect to sociology because they have the opportunity to compare



multiple perspectives. Collins says that black women, who are ‘outsiders within’ must ‘assimilate a [perspective] that is quite different from their own’, and therefore have the opportunity to develop a kind of ‘double consciousness’ whereas white men can stay within their own dominant perspective (Collins 1986, s26).

Feminist empiricists focus on the role of feminist social values in the production of scientific knowledge, with a strong emphasis on social-scientific research (E. Anderson 2004; Longino 1994). Helen Longino (1994) cites cases where scientific advances resulted from the application of feminist social values such as a preference for theories that are explanatorily complex (e.g. Barbara McClintock’s work on genetic transposition). Anderson (2004) argues that a feminist understanding of divorce provides a more scientifically fruitful way of framing research problems in divorce research, and makes it more likely that we will arrive at a good understanding of the impact of divorce on families and the individuals involved.

Anderson’s suggestion is therefore that we read these traditions not as proposing that *all* knowledge is socially situated but rather that *some* knowledge is socially situated. Further, this is the sort of knowledge that is important in feminist theory and practice. So we can read the situated knowledge thesis as, in part, a methodological injunction. We should focus on a particular kind of knowledge: socially situated knowledge.

We can now turn to the second question. Recall the distinction between causal and constitutive dependence: knowledge causally depends on social factors iff social factors play a significant causal role in the production of knowledge, whereas knowledge constitutively depends on social factors iff social factors partly constitute the production of knowledge. Where does the situated knowledge thesis stand on the question of causal versus constitutive dependence? Drawing on the survey of the literature in Ashton and McKenna (forthcoming), we can say that there are strands in feminist epistemology that seem to only involve causal dependence, and strands that seem to involve constitutive dependence. I lack the space for a detailed overview here, so I will merely provide examples from both the feminist standpoint theory and feminist empiricist tradition that seem to fall on each side of this divide.

One common thought in feminist standpoint theory is that our social identities impact on the evidence we have access to. Those who are oppressed may have access to evidence that those who are relatively privileged don’t. One finds versions of this idea in classic works in feminist standpoint theory, including Nancy Hartsock (1983) and Collins (1986). Hartsock argues that women’s roles as wives and mothers mean they are responsible for a range of tasks that are essential to the functioning of society (e.g. child-rearing) and the household (e.g. cleaning). This means they tend to have a more intimate acquaintance with what is necessary to satisfy our needs than men tend to have. Collins argues that black women have an epistemic advantage over white men with respect to sociology because their experiences furnish them with evidence that others lack:

For example, while Black women have and are themselves mothers, they encounter distorted versions of themselves and their mothers under the mantle of Black matriarchy thesis. Similarly, for those Black women who confront racial and sexual discrimination, and know that their mothers and grandmothers certainly did, explanations of Black women's poverty

that stress low achievement motivation and the lack of Black female ‘human capital’ are less likely to ring true (Collins 1986, s28).

All Hartsock and Collins need here is the (very plausible) idea that our social identities shape what we can know by shaping the evidence we have access to. This is clearly true, and it is a straightforward instance of causal dependence.<sup>xvii</sup>

One common thought in feminist empiricism is that we need to look at the causal forces that shape our knowledge. This thought is reminiscent of Quine (1969). But, where Quine studied (or rather urged epistemologists to study) the psychological processes by which subjects form beliefs, feminist empiricists study the process of knowledge production in social contexts. For example, Anderson (1995a) cites studies showing that the data obtained in anthropological fieldwork depends on the anthropologist’s gender. She concludes that, if we want to get accurate data, we need diverse teams of anthropologists. This is also a straightforward case of causal dependence.

While some strands of thought in feminist standpoint theory and feminist empiricism require mere causal dependence, other strands require quite a bit more. Sandra Harding (a prominent feminist standpoint theorist) and Helen Longino (a prominent feminist empiricist) have both called attention to the role played by social values in knowledge production. I am going to argue that, while their views about the role of values differ, they both involve a form of constitutive dependence.

For Harding (see Harding 1991), women (and other groups who have historically been under-represented in science) are better at identifying *hidden values* (such as assumptions about race and gender) operative in science than men. Take the episode in primatology documented in Wallen (2000, 1990). For decades, primatologists were puzzled by the mating habits of rhesus monkeys. The sexual behavior of rhesus monkeys peaked at times when females were ovulating, but how did the male monkeys know when to initiate sex? It had been observed that female rhesus monkeys slapped the ground in front of male rhesus monkeys prior to sexual activity, but this observation hadn’t been seen as relevant to the question of rhesus monkeys’ mating habits. But an influx of female primatologists and broader societal changes led to a questioning of the sexist assumption (females don’t initiate sex) that underlay this rejection of the relevance of the observation.

Before the rejection of this sexist assumption, scientists didn’t know much about the mating habits of rhesus monkeys. After the assumption was rejected, they did. Did this advance in knowledge causally or constitutively depend on social factors, such as the influx of female primatologists and broader societal changes? Take the observation that female rhesus monkeys slap the ground in front of males. The researchers had access to this observation before and after these societal changes, but it wasn’t conceptualized as evidence beforehand. It was rather viewed as difficult to explain in light of the sexist assumption that females don’t initiate sex. If we recognize that there’s a step that needs to be taken in order to turn observations into evidence, then we can say that these social forces didn’t merely cause an increase in our knowledge, but were also partly constitutive of it.

For Longino (see Longino 2002, 1997, 1994, 1990), the key idea is that feminist social values play a crucial role in justifying scientific theories because they inform a range of methodological decisions, including decisions about how to decide between theories that seem to do equally well in terms of empirical adequacy. This idea is nicely summarized by Anderson:

[T]heories do not merely state facts but organize them into systems that tell us what their significance is. Theories logically go beyond the facts; they are ‘underdetermined’ by all the empirical evidence that is or ever could be adduced in their favor ... The evidential link between an observed fact and a theoretical hypothesis can only be secured by background auxiliary hypotheses. This leaves open the logical possibility that ideological judgments may not be implications of an independently supported theory but figure in the justification of the theory itself, by supplying evidential links between empirical observations and hypotheses (E. Anderson 1995a, 77).

Feminist social values provide the ‘background assumptions’ against which we can take empirical evidence to provide justification for particular scientific theories. This can be illustrated by the episode in primatology discussed above. Does the observation that female rhesus monkeys slap the ground in front of males support the hypothesis that the female wants to imitate sex? It doesn’t if we’re working with certain background assumptions about who initiates sexual activity; it might if we reject these assumptions. We need more than causal dependence to capture this thought. The point is not that background sexist assumptions might cause one to ignore evidence that one would otherwise pay attention to. (Though this is, of course, often the case.) The point is rather that social values provide the framework against which we decide which hypotheses the evidence supports (and the degree to which it supports them). The processes by which scientific theories are justified, and so by which (when it goes well) scientific knowledge is produced therefore constitutively involve social factors.

Finally, we can turn to the question of the relationship between social encroachment and the situated knowledge thesis, and feminist epistemologies more generally. Insofar as it is a methodological injunction, it stands in an interesting relation to social encroachment. Social encroachment—like pragmatic encroachment in general—is a thesis about the nature of knowledge, specifically, the knowledge relation. It says that whether some  $S$  stands in the knowledge relation to some  $p$  depends on various social factors. As such, it seems to be a thesis about knowledge in general. This prompts a question: can all knowledge be ‘socially encroached’ (or ‘pragmatically encroached’)? Take my knowledge that  $2+2=4$ . Can we vary relevant social factors (or the stakes) in such a way that I no longer know that  $2+2=4$ ? This seems questionable. No matter how this issue turns out, the important point here is that this is not an issue that feminist epistemologies need get embroiled in. As Anderson tells us, feminist epistemologists don’t want to convince us that our knowledge that  $2+2=4$  is gendered. They want to stop us treating this sort of knowledge as the paradigm, and so constructing our theories of knowledge around it. The core of the feminist epistemological critique of mainstream epistemology is that it has ignored situated knowledge rather than that all knowledge (constitutively) depends on social factors.

Insofar as the situated knowledge thesis is a claim about the way in which our social location impacts on what we know, we have seen that some strands in feminist epistemology involve

constitutive dependence of knowledge on social factors, whereas others involve mere causal dependence. So the situated knowledge thesis can be taken in two ways, one of which involves the same sort of social dependence as in social encroachment, the other of which involves a sort of social dependence that can be happily accepted by epistemologists of all stripes. For my part, I think that there are good arguments in the feminist tradition for both forms of dependence (see Ashton and McKenna forthcoming for an overview of some of them), and that these arguments are more compelling than the argument from cases or the argument from knowledge-action principles presented in this paper. All told, there is good reason for those interested in pragmatic encroachment—whether for or against—to engage with this literature.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

In this paper I have tried to do two things. The first was to argue that, just as there is reason to think that knowledge depends on the stakes, there is also reason to think that knowledge depends on social factors. Further, I argued that, while social encroachment and stakes encroachment may be hard to tease apart, there is a case to be made for social encroachment independently of stakes encroachment. The second was to argue that there are some interesting connections, but also some interesting differences, between social encroachment and feminist epistemologies. One difference concerns scope. Where social encroachment is a view about the (social) nature of knowledge, feminist epistemologies tend to encourage us to focus on classes of knowledge—like social-scientific knowledge or knowledge of the social world—that has a clear social dimension. Another difference concerns the sort of social dependence that is at issue. While some projects in feminist epistemology do require the sort of strong constitutive dependence of knowledge on the social countenanced by social encroachers, not all do. Putting this together, we can conclude that there is an important sense in which feminist epistemologies are less radical than social encroachment (and pragmatic encroachment more generally). This should occasion some pause, given that pragmatic encroachment has been regarded as a central topic in epistemology in the past 20 years, whereas feminist epistemology has very much been confined to the margins.<sup>xviii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> As a rough first pass, I will say that a factor *F* is epistemic with respect to *p* just in case *F* indicates that *p* is true, whereas *F* is pragmatic with respect to *p* just in case it is not epistemic.

<sup>ii</sup> Social encroachment isn't new. While the orthodox view in the philosophy of science is that social factors merely play an enabling role in the production of scientific knowledge, some have argued that social factors can also play a role in the justification of scientific theories, for instance by bridging the gap between observational data and theory (see Longino 2002, 1990). This is a form of social encroachment about scientific knowledge. (I briefly discuss this view in §4).

<sup>iii</sup> For attempts to draw connections between pragmatic encroachment and feminist epistemologies see Kukla (2015) and Stanley (2016).

<sup>iv</sup> See Intemann (2010) for a helpful discussion of the relationship between feminist standpoint theory and feminist empiricism.

<sup>v</sup> Annis (1978) and Wright (2011) use this sort of case to argue that the intuitive correctness of knowledge ascriptions varies with the subject's social role. It is however unclear if they want to establish the metaphysical claim that whether a subject knows depends on her social role or the semantic claim that whether she can truly be said to 'know' depends on her social role.

<sup>vi</sup> This case is inspired by a case in Stanley (2015, 254).

<sup>vii</sup> These cases are inspired by Moss (2018, 230–34), but they are different in that Moss's subject relies on statistical generalisations rather than testimony.

<sup>viii</sup> This case raises several issues that I lack the space to adequately address. But I would like to highlight two of them. First, why call this 'social encroachment' rather than (following Moss 2018) 'moral encroachment'? How one answers this question depends on one's views about the nature of moral facts, but in any event, I see no reason to think that social encroachment and moral encroachment are incompatible. For helpful discussion of moral encroachment see Basu and Schroeder (2019), Fritz (2017), Gardiner (2018) and Pace (2011). Second, why think that the sense of 'should' in which Bob should not believe that Linda is an administrative assistant is *epistemic*? As Simion (2018) points out, not every norm that permits or forbids believing under certain epistemic conditions (in this case, having merely statistical evidence) is an epistemic norm. Put roughly, my view is that the norm is epistemic in the sense that it has to do with Bob's responsibilities as an inquirer. While this yields a rather expansive conception of the epistemic domain, I think it is of a piece with viewing epistemology as centrally concerned with the ethics of belief (or, better, inquiry).

<sup>ix</sup> For relevant discussion of the intuitions supposedly supporting stakes encroachment see Brown (2006), Gerken (2013), Nagel (2008) and Rysiew (2001). For some recent empirical evidence that casts doubt on these intuitions see Rose et al. (forthcoming).

<sup>x</sup> While several authors defend principles that connect what one knows with what one may treat as a reason for acting, they differ as to the formulation of these principles. Some (e.g. Hawthorne

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and Stanley 2008 and Williamson 2005) defend a biconditional norm like PR, whereas others (e.g. Fantl & McGrath 2009) only defend the sufficiency direction of PR.

<sup>xi</sup> This is why Hawthorne and Stanley (2008) restrict PR to actions that depend on  $p$ . Because I only discuss actions that depend on the relevant proposition, I ignore this restriction in what follows.

<sup>xii</sup> While I won't explore this point here, one could take this to be a reason to hold that norms of rationality are a source of what Dotson (2014) calls third-order epistemic oppression.

<sup>xiii</sup> One might worry that social encroachment is in tension with a key idea behind standpoint theory, which is that those who are oppressed along some dimension enjoy compensating epistemic benefits (for more on feminist standpoint theory see §4). I take this worry seriously, and adequately responding to it would require a full paper. But let me make two points. First, feminist standpoint theorists hold that the oppressed have an epistemic advantage that the privileged lack, not that there are no epistemic benefits enjoyed by the privileged which the oppressed lack. Second, this epistemic advantage doesn't need to be thought of in terms of (more) knowledge. For instance, Fricker (1999) thinks of it in terms of being better positioned to rectify deficiencies in our existing concepts (or in our wider conceptual schemes), and Medina (2012) thinks of it in terms of being more likely to develop certain intellectual virtues.

<sup>xiv</sup> For relevant discussion see C. Anderson (2015), Brown (2008), Fassio (2017), Gao (2017), Gerken (2011), Lackey (2010) and Reed (2010).

<sup>xv</sup> This distinction is essentially equivalent to Haslanger's (1995) distinction between two ways in which gender and racial categories might depend on social factors. I focus on Boghossian because his discussion is primarily about knowledge, not because he was the first to make this distinction.

<sup>xvi</sup> Indeed, some have objected to stakes encroachers that the arguments they cite (in particular, the argument from cases) only show that whether you know causally depends on what is at stake (e.g. Nagel 2008).

<sup>xvii</sup> I want to emphasise that I am not saying that one only finds claims about causal dependence of knowledge on the social in Collins' or Hartsock's work. The point is just that parts of their work exemplify a common strand of thought in feminist standpoint theory, and that particular strand is only committed to causal dependence. For more see Ashton and McKenna (forthcoming, sec. 3).

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