Knowledge and Power in Academia: 
A Sociology of Science Case Study of a 
Research Community in Marketing

Per Østergaard
Matthias Bode
Department of Marketing & Management, University of Southern Denmark

Abstract
This case study analyzes the scientific and managerial discussions inside a research stream in marketing labelled as Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). When CCT was introduced by Arnould and Thompson (2005) it was part of a strategy to create legitimacy for the outsider status of interpretive research in marketing. It was argued that interpretive researchers needed to be more pragmatic in their attitude. This was a fundamental change in the scientific culture in this stream of research. This paper analyse these changes and study how CCT represent a new and pragmatic attitude. It is shown how the changes intended by CCT can imply a shift from a focus on new groundbreaking research to an awareness of realpolitik consequences. This strategic move can be seen as an example of how scientific cultures try to move from a marginal position to the mainstream. The consequences of this attempt to manage science are analyzed and solutions to problems created by these changes are developed in form of a reflexive research position.

The second time around, the science marketers were more reserved. With amazement, Craig Thompson and Eric Arnould (2007, 4) observed the quick and wide diffusion of their latest branding achievement, named “CCT (Consumer Culture Theory).” Ten years earlier, Craig Thompson was commenting less modestly on the first deliberate branding approach of the same research tradition: “No other brand name – interpretivism, alternative, postpositivism, super-duper rigorous touchy, feely stuff – sold as well to the field [as postmodernism]” (Thompson 1997, 261). The strategy direction was the same: how to overcome the marginalized status of a research tradition that was known as and even proudly wore the name tag “weird science” (Brown & Schau 2007, 357, Cova et al. 2009).

The branding, or more broadly defined as the marketing of science, is not a new topic in marketing (Bagozzi 1976; Fine 1981). Most famously, in 1983 Peter and Olsen tried to reverse the discussion of the scientific status of marketing by posing the question “Is science marketing?” However, this issue is not bound to the post 1980 paradigmatic conflicts in consumer research. Historical research (Tadajewski 2006) points out the “positivist” orientation of marketing theory was directly shaped and formed in the 1950s and 1960s by political and social institutions (such as the Ford and Carnegie foundations).

Connecting the abstract world of science and the “real world” context of doing science is still a topic that raises feelings of awkwardness, unease, or even anxiety. On the one hand there is science: the rational, objective search of truth, governed by strict adherence to scientific knowledge. On the other hand, there is the intrusion of subjective criteria such as careers, promotions, the job market, professional obligations and personal motivations. Usually, it is acknowledged that these issues matter, but they are relegated to informal discussions, board meetings, or the occasional dinner address. There seems to be a widely held assumption in consumer research that the nitty gritty management issues of academic life should be separate from the knowledge products of science.

The general direction of the branding procedures of Arnould and Thompson is a necessary step towards a more developed discussion of academic research because they explicitly take into account the “realpolitik complexities” of science (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 6). However, the discussion rests upon undeveloped assumptions about the relationships between theory/knowledge and the status and social reproduction of academic cultures. It will be argued that this can lead to counterproductive effects.
The goal of the article is to deconstruct the scientific and managerial discussions inside a research stream in marketing and consumer behaviour that is known as CCT (Atkins 1983; Harland 1987). This subfield of marketing and consumer behaviour originated in early 1980s research streams that criticized the individual, psychological, managerial and experimental orientation of consumer behaviour. Coming from the fringes of consumer behaviour, under the label of CCT this research field has developed into an accepted part of marketing and consumer behaviour (MacInnis & Folkes, 2010). It can be characterized by a socio-cultural orientation with a focus on the role of consumption in societies. In their current manifestations, a permanent discussion focus on the tensions between a critical tradition that includes a rejection of the normal science logic (Kuhn 1962/1970) and the pragmatic necessity of extending stabilizing organizational and infrastructural support systems in the academic system. This tension links the internal discourse of CCT with the wider theoretical and empirical frame of academic cultures. As the higher education landscape is confronted with severe challenges of globalization, underfinanced mass universities and a managerial spirit with a drive for efficiency and productivity (Henkel 1997; Becher & Trowler 2001, Currie et al. 2010), a thorough research stream is focussing on the link between science and the real world context.

In this way, the intention of the article is to point out how the discussion of the inherent problems of the CCT construction is relevant to better understand the socio-temporal dynamics and the management of research streams in marketing. A basic prerequisite for this discussion is making the intertwined relationship between science and the social field explicit and relegating this discussion from informal meetings with colleague to the forefront of a strategically and theoretically sound debate on the future development of consumer research.

The background story: the CCT articles

The research tradition that came into the light with the “Consumer esthetics and symbolic consumption” conference in 1980 (Hirschman & Holbrook 1981) has lived through many labels: symbolic, alternative, qualitative, interpretive, hermeneutic, post-positivist, heretical or postmodern consumer research (Hudson & Ozanne 1988; Hirschman 1989; Sherry 1991; Hirschman & Holbrook 1992; Brown 1995; Thompson 1997). In 2005, Arnould and Thompson published “Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research” in the prestigious *Journal of Consumer Research* and established the name “CCT” for this research tradition. This was further manifested through the first CCT conference in 2006, which developed into an annual event with its own Doctoral course. CCT became an influential point of reference and a how-to guideline for what was formerly known mostly as interpretive consumer research. CCT took on a life of its own, beyond the control and intentions of the founding fathers. The child was so intractable that the founding fathers had to interfere with a follow up article (Arnould & Thompson 2007), in which they tried to clarify some of the criticism, or in their view, misperceptions, misunderstandings and misreadings. After this second article, it was obvious that CCT had become a powerful and influential label and framing device. It also became evident that CCT had conceptual ambiguities and the reception of the first article was not as linear and direct as the authors had intended.

To better understand the criticism and reactions, it is important to point out the evolution of the first CCT article. This is not an individual research article, but was initiated by Dawn Iacobucci, at that time the editor of the Journal of Consumer Research. (Thompson & Arnould 2008). She asked all the area editors of JCR to write reflections pieces that distilled their respective areas of expertise. To keep the number of articles manageable, she grouped the area editors into teams, based on their paradigmatic ties. Eric Arnould and Craig Thompson were asked to write about postmodern consumer research, which they as CCT. Arnould and Thompson (2005) was the first one of the reflection articles to be published. The other contributions were published in JCR June 2006.

It is difficult to understand how the authors could repress the idea that the article would be read as a manifesto for consumer culture theory. First drafts of the article created heated discussions when they were presented both at the North American *Association for Consumer Research* (ACR) conference in 2004 and the European ACR conference in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2005 (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 4). The methodological claims of CCT about the interpretive agencies of the reader as in reader-response theory (Scott 1994) or a Foucauldian discourse analysis (Thompson 2004) would assume such effects.

A main emphasis in the second CCT article was to point out the levels and audiences of the first CCT article. Here, Arnould and Thompson stress the target audiences of Ph.D. students and young assistant professors on the one hand, and the established, broader marketing community on the other
hand (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 3f.). With these different audiences, the strategic directions were split as well. First, the framework for summarizing the existing research should have a theoretical value, helping not yet fully initiated CCT researchers better understand the existing, diverse research. Second, the branding approach had a pragmatic focus: changing the marginalized status of the CCT tradition. To reach this goal, the CCT concept was constructed to become more accessible and to be perceived by the mainstream as less esoteric and more practically relevant. In the end, we have two versions of CCT: CCT1, representing the purely research oriented version and CCT2, representing the pragmatic, instrumental version. This article argues that this dichotomy leads to severe problems when it comes to improving the theoretical work of doing science as well as the pragmatic work of establishing the institutional background for doing science. Before the inherent logic of the two CCT versions is analysed, the background for combining both aspects is discussed.

Layers of scientific cultures and the sociology of scientific knowledge

According to the received view in marketing science, empirical reality is usually restricted to phenomena: something to be analyzed by scientists (Hunt 1983). The possibility that the empirical world influences scientists or the production of scientific knowledge is excluded. (Meja & Stehr 1999). Laws are discovered and accumulated, independent from the colour of skin, religious beliefs, gender, or nationality of scientists. In this conception, a normative logic is developed in which a particular code of conduct is responsible for the production of objective fact. A famous example is Robert K. Merton, who developed the concept of scientific ethos, defined as an “emotionally toned complex of rules, prescriptions, beliefs, values and presuppositions which are held to be binding” (Merton 1942/1973, 26). These rules work to safeguard science from the social field.

Starting with the work of Thomas S. Kuhn (1962/1970), the sociological approaches of science evolved, taking a different point of view on the relationship between science and the empirical world. Scientific knowledge is not seen anymore as the innocent, transparent representation of nature, but relative to a particular culture (Pickering 1992, 5). What makes the difference between empty marks on sheets of paper and accepted scientific laws and theories are scientific communities that share a consensus about a certain paradigm. A community of scientists, united by education, professional interaction, and communication, share a paradigm (Kuhn 1970, 182). In this way, a scientific discipline begins to be defined sociologically.

In the first CCT article, Arnould/Thompson excluded the seminal science debate of the 1980s, in which interpretive consumer research tried to destabilize the hegemony of a singular scientific method, and introduced the sociology of science. They justified this omission by pointing to existing overviews of the debate. They justified their focus on providing a thematic framework by noting this was not present in the literature (Arnould & Thompson 2005, 869). However, in the second CCT article, they had to clarify misunderstandings based on differences in conceptions of the philosophy of science, and insisted on the rock solid embedding of CCT in the sociology of scientific knowledge (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 5). Oddly enough, their subsequent discussion of practical solutions to overcoming the marginalization of the CCT community lacks acknowledgement of the rich works that have been published in this area. Instead of focussing on the complex relationships of individual, disciplinary and institutional frames in which scientific knowledge is produced, they argue for a change in these modes of production, using “thought leaders” and establishing social networks with influential individuals in the marketing mainstream (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 18). Before a more thorough analysis of their logic is developed, a short overview of basic concepts and ideas in the sociology of scientific knowledge is necessary.

When Arnould & Thompson (2005, 877) ask for a change in the pragmatic orientation of CCT researchers, they refer to the “scientific culture” of CCT. In this sense, they focus on the informal, scientific community as a network, resulting from direct and indirect interaction with other colleagues outside of the local academic institution. Scientific communities such as interpretive consumer research or behavioral decision theory (BDT) shape their methods, standards, subjects, and traditions as well as role specific values. The influence of the specific scientific community is strong, as it works as a peer group that negotiates the discipline’s hierarchy with an influence on individual careers (Tuire & Erno 2001). The scientific community sets the standards with which the work of researchers is evaluated and their integration into the discipline is assessed: “local control over scientific work is never complete and is mediated by reputational groups.” (Whitley 1984, 70). Besides tacit knowledge, the scientific community is based on a moral order including vices and virtues (Ylijoki 2000). Research on scientific cultures started with C.P. Snow’s (1959) concept of the “two cultures” of
Science and humanities. More thorough and empirically based work is exemplified in the landmark study, “Academic tribes and territories” by Tony Becher (1989; Becher & Trowler 2001), with a special focus on the relation between disciplinary cultures and the typical nature of knowledge (such as pure/applied and hard/soft). A potential change in the value orientation of CCT would be therefore connected with certain production modes of scientific knowledge.

Subsequent work on scientific cultures pointed out, that disciplinary cultures are not static, but dynamically related to macro changes. Henkel (2000) emphasized higher education policies as an important factor for the dynamic of disciplinary cultures. Becher & Trowler (2001, 38f.) explicitly mention the influence of different social frames for specific disciplinary cultures. Besides the infrastructural and political level, they add the institutional level (type of higher education institution, department and faculty style), the differentiation between rural and urban modes of research, and the social mechanisms of convergent and divergent disciplines. A wider context describes national differences in the respective scientific cultures. Although Arnould and Thompson (2007, 7), try to avoid an American ethnocentric perspective on CCT, it might be more a Freudian slip of the tongue when they phrase their main topic as “the social reproduction of CCT within the American marketing academy (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 5).” While data on broader national comparisons of disciplinary cultures are rare, the existing research shows a clear influence of national cultures on disciplinary cultures (Podgorecki 1997; Ylijoki 2000, 357). Even on the level of departmental organisation of disciplines, national differences have to be taken into account (Malcolm 2003). Becher and Trowler (2001, 44) cite, from their interviews within academic disciplines, academics talking about “typical French Papers,” the “run-of-the-mill physics in Russia,” or the “heavy handed nature of German mechanical engineering.” These national differences are also reflected in the predominant focus on scientific cultures research. On a broad level, Anglo-American research has a tendency to acknowledge the value influence of the institution. More congruent with a European intellectual history is the focus in the continental literature on the individual academic and/or disciplinary values as a main determinant (Välimaa 1998, 121). One reason is the stronger European tendency to unify the national higher education system, while in the US, there are more pronounced differences among institutions. Therefore, the position of universities as an entity with a specific culture and subsequent values is more established in the US.

Although Arnould and Thompson seem to assume an existing shared commitment to the discipline, there are indications that the cohesion of disciplinary cultures in the form of academic communities is eroding. In this perspective, changing higher education institutions and policies have brought to light the dynamics of power, competition and hierarchy in academic communities: “Academics do not share a discipline base (…) they share conditions, status and functions (Kogan, Moses & El-Khawas 1994, 28f.).” Though this assessment might be exaggerated, it should be a warning not to equate “community and peers” too easily with communitarian values, good and cosy relations and a general “warm glow” (Kogan 2000, 209). There is still the need for an analysis of the different roles and functions within academic communities. None of the above mentioned contextual and global factors is taken into account when it comes to discussing changing the scientific culture of CCT.

Finally, a discussion of scientific cultures has to take into account the individual identities, goals, values and motivations of researchers. Research on individual, academic culture started with a deductively derived set of prescriptive assumptions based on the philosophy of science conception: what is necessary to make the system of science possible. An example is Ann E. Austin (1990, 62) who included “the focus on pursuing and disseminating knowledge, the recognition of the importance of academic freedom, the commitment to intellectual honesty, the value given to collegiality, and the commitment to service to society.” An example of less normative and more empirically based research is Hackett (1990), who found a set of value tensions that dominates the life world of individual academics. In the marketing field, there is Hirschman (1985), who tried to identify personality types in relation to scientific styles, and follow up research by Leong, Sheth and Tan (1993), on a broader empirical basis. In Stiles’ (2004) research on management academics in Canada and Britain, it became clear that individual scientific values can be characterized by personal arrangements and negotiations with external demands. This research can be summarized in the sense that the times of Max Weber (1919/1973) are long gone, in which an essential condition for becoming a scientist is to feel an ecstatic passion, to be completely caught up with an idea as if the fate of his/her soul depends on the accomplishment of the last research project. The implication was that scientists should value disinterestedness and that scientific work should have a value in itself, apart from any personal motives or profits. Today the researcher’s individual academic identity is shaped by the disparity of academic
professionals, from star professors to adjunct, part-time faculty, contract researcher and “academic wandering gypsies” (Enders 1999, 80). Empirically, individual academic culture is furthermore experienced as in danger because of a deprofessionalization of academic life and new managerial values, characterized by the two tendencies of “academic entrepreneurialism” (Etzkowitz 1983) and “academic managerialism” (Deem & Johnson 2000). Academic entrepreneurialism is seen as a result of changed university-industry relations, in which corporations are increasingly involved in universities, influencing research topics, methods, and the culture of the university. Academic managerialism refers mainly to a changed distribution of power in universities. New governance structures emphasize centralized administrative institutions, resulting in a loss of autonomy, diminished spans of control and greater surveillance and accountability on the side of the faculty (Becher & Trowler 2001, 12).

To talk about scientific cultures and their changes, it is necessary to take into account this dynamic system of internal and external variables. Primarily, there are micro layers of individuals, meso layers of institutions and discipline, and macro layers of national and international relationships. In the CCT construction of Arnould/Thompson, neither of these aspects is theoretically integrated. In the following analysis, the intention is to deconstruct the inherent logic of the CCT articles that governs the discussion of changing the scientific culture of the research tradition.

The CCT logic of research and realpolitik

Our deconstructive reading of Arnould and Thompson (2005; 2007) reveals two different aspirations for CCT. The first one is the strive for new and groundbreaking knowledge, which has always been a part of the agenda for interpretive consumer research. The other aspiration is to move CCT from a marginal position outside the mainstream into a position in which this kind of research can achieve institutional legitimacy and power. These goals indicate that CCT research has been marginalized and has mainly focused on striving for new knowledge. As it is clearly pointed out by Arnould and Thompson (2007), a scientific discipline can not survive within the university system without both knowledge and power. The focus on both knowledge and power is a break with the self-image as the rebel in the interpretive research “movement” which is the origin of CCT. It is not possible to understand current CCT without remembering the antecedent movement, which could be entitled The Interpretive Turn (Sherry 1991). Therefore, we will analyse how these two elements, scientific knowledge and empirical reality (here represented as power), are constructed in CCT, in relation to The Interpretive Turn. To do this, we will use the semiotic square, an analytical framework developed by Greimas (e.g., 1987; 1990), who used it for analyzing narratives.

The semiotic square defines a phenomenon as a contradiction, based on the structuralistic approach to thought as contradictions. The human being is, in a logical sense, stretched out between life and death. In our case, academic research is an activity that takes place at universities, and these activities are stretched out between knowledge and power.

The University

Knowledge Power

Figure 1

The university is defined by the interaction between knowledge and power. When the first universities were founded in Europe in Middle Ages, they were defined primarily as a power institution governed by the church. Later, Humboldt (1767-1835) coined the idea of the university as an institution independent of both the church and the state. The historical justification stemmed from a consensus to protect the activities of pursuing the truth (Altbach 2001). Thus, the focus has shifted from power to knowledge for its own sake. In Merton’s prescriptive value set for a scientific ethos that makes science possible, this was expressed as “disinterestedness.” Scientists should primarily be motivated by the general advancement of science. They should not apply illegitimate means for their own gain (Merton 1942/1973, 274) Today, the university is still defined by the interaction between knowledge and power, a reality Arnould and Thompson is well aware of.
As already indicated in the sociology of scientific knowledge discussion, the power-knowledge relationship is dynamic, and there will be different strategies involved when it has to be decided how to deal with this relationship. These strategies can be perceived as narratives and analyzed as such in the semiotic square as it is developed by Greimas (e.g., 1987; 1990). At an abstract level, there are two ways to deal with the power-knowledge relationship if we stick to the semiotic square. The power-knowledge relationship is the logical foundation for the university as an institution. The university is stretched out between these positions. The relationship is also characterized by the fact that the position can only exist if each has a share of the other’s position. Power cannot exist without some knowledge, but it is, at the same time, “the suppose to know” position, and thereby satisfied by the knowledge it already possesses. The knowledge position is continuously striving for new knowledge. It can be described as the “want to know” position. This strive for new and groundbreaking knowledge implies that this position cannot be too closely related to the power, since the power position is the “suppose to know” position and it does not want new and groundbreaking knowledge which can questioned its position.

The dynamic relationship between the power and knowledge positions makes it possible to move from the one to the other by using different strategies, perceived as narratives. The story about the development of CCT, as it is told by Arnould and Thompson (2005; 2007), has The Interpretive Turn (Sherry 1991) as the point of origin for CCT. Researchers who were a part of The Interpretive Turn did not succeed in developing the movement into a legitimate and recognized research position (Arnould & Thompson 2005). It is Arnould and Thompson’s intention to change this situation through development of CCT. They want to move from the knowledge position to the power position by using branding strategies.

An analysis of the power-knowledge relationship as it was during The Interpretive Turn will have to take into consideration the strive for new knowledge which could be groundbreaking compared with traditional mainstream knowledge. Another important issue was the resistance against connection to business (e.g., Holbrook 1985), and thereby the power position at a business school. These strategies can be described like this:

![Diagram of the power-knowledge relationship](image)

In the Greimasian semiotic, the knowledge position is negated into a non-knowledge. This should not be understood as not-knowledge. Instead it is a negation in a logical sense. These negations can be seen as logical tools by which we can build a bridge between the main contradictions. Since the idea of pure knowledge, which is knowledge for knowledge’s sake, is often associated with the researcher in the ivory tower (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 875), the negation of the knowledge position is the researcher as one who is participating in the world. To do this, the researcher needs to be pragmatic and give up the idealistic perception of how to gain new knowledge.

The researchers in The Interpretive Turn did not seem to have an interest in giving up the idealistic point of view for a more pragmatic position. Thereby, they were isolated from the mainstream and the power. There is a position in the semiotic square for isolation, since it is the logical negation of the power position. The non-power position is a situation in which the power can not be managed, and that is in isolation. At the same time isolation from the power and the mainstream is also seen as a precondition for developing new and groundbreaking knowledge, which is pure, and knowledge for
knowledge’s sake. The researchers in The Interpretive Turn stayed in the knowledge isolation relationship and they could, therefore, work on pure research (e.g. Belk 1986; Holbrook 1986). A consequence of this is a marginalized position in the field of consumer research.

Arnould and Thompson will not accept these conditions. They think The Interpretive Turn and CCT should be recognized as a legitimate stream of research in consumer research and marketing. To do this, they will accept the pragmatic premises and participate in the mainstream community to be a part of the power position (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 18). By doing so, they have to accept another movement, in which they have to convince those in the power position to recognize CCT as a legitimate stream of research. This is done by the CCT branding strategy. When they use such tools there is a problem, since the absolute power position is a place in which you “suppose to know.” That is the logical opposite of “want to know” in the knowledge position. Staying in the power position is the end of research as an activity, striving for new and groundbreaking knowledge. To move away from this dead end (with its prestige and power), researchers need to be idealistic and isolate themselves mentally from the power position and the taken for granted knowledge. Therefore, the researcher who wants to do research, has to keep a distance from the power position and value the non power position by taking on an idealistic point of view and thereby also recognizing isolation from the power position as a premises for doing research.

The two parts of the semiotic square, which has been presented so far, demonstrates some of the problems raised by Arnould and Thompson (2005; 2007), in which a hitherto non mainstream movement as The Interpretive Turn is turned into an academic brand and marketed to the power position at universities. If the two parts are put together in semiotic square, we arrive at this model:

The model shows the dialectical process in the knowledge power relationship is not simple. There can only be an exchange from one position to the other if consequences of the exchange are reflected as a narrative process in which somebody has to do something under certain conditions with some implication. We have demonstrated how The Interpretive Turn did not want to be pragmatic and therefore could not move towards the power position. It is even possible that some of the researchers in The Interpretive Turn did not have an interest in being in the power position and, therefore, they stayed in the non power position, as isolated from the mainstream. In this isolated knowledge position, they
could concentrate on doing research without thinking of the purpose for doing it. The non power, isolated position can generate pure research which is done without a purpose except to strive for new groundbreaking knowledge. Arnould and Thompson recognize the results gained by The Interpretive Turn, but they point out The Interpretive Turn had to do something if they wanted to gain influence comparable to the research that has already been done. Contrary to The Interpretive Turn, Arnould and Thompson do not mind being pragmatic, and, therefore, they can move from the knowledge position towards the power position, and they know already that they need to participate by mingling with the mainstream, to move closer to the power position (Arnould & Thompson 2007, 18).

When CCT strives for the power position, the focus shifts from research to realpolitik. Arnould and Thompson (2007) refer to Foucault when they reflect upon the fact that “solutions to specific institutional dilemmas are never resolutions but rather reconfigurations that pose new problems and dangers (p. 4).” Nevertheless, we think Arnould & Thompson are too optimistic in their focus on realpolitik, and they underestimate the long-term dangers in this perspective.

In the semiotic square, we have shown how isolation in the non power position can generate groundbreaking research and new knowledge, when the participating non knowledge position generates an engaged participation in realpolitik to reach the power position. Despite Arnould and Thompson’s (2007, 5) claims to not strive for a normal science status for CCT, we see a revised framework for CCT research five pages later. It seems as if Arnould & Thompson cannot present a CCT article without a model for how to do research, which could easily be understood as a normal science research program by many, even those inside the CCT stream of research. That is the danger of a heavy focus on realpolitik.

**Conclusion**

These insights from the analysis based on the semiotic square could be combined with our earlier discussion on the different research traditions. CCT is stretched between a CCT1 research, which is the research done in The Interpretive turn, and CCT2, which is research guided by an interest in realpolitik. As we see it, the two different perceptions of research have to be united in a position in which there has to be a strive for new and groundbreaking research. But this has to be done based on a position in which basic contradictions between knowledge and power are reflected and are informed by the dynamic nexus of embedded scientific cultures.

In a courageously and very welcome way, Arnould and Thompson have lifted fundamental questions about the management of scientific cultures from backrooms to the centre stage of a public discussion. While these topics are of vital importance for the future of a small research stream in the broader consumer research area, they gain a wider significance by deeply connecting the scientific realm with the empirical world: can we really separate the core activity of researchers of “doing science” from the managerial activities for the scientific community? And if we want to improve the social reproduction of the scientific culture, where is the best angle to start with?

Our analysis of their conception tried to point out that these important questions can run into the danger of a dangerous shortcut solution, in which a) the contextual frames for scientific cultures and b) the modalities of moving between the knowledge/power nexus are neglected. To go beyond these limitations, we suggest the term reflexive research, mediating between CCT1 and CCT2.
All our sympathy is with CCT1 research, because it represents the myth of the real university, in which scientists were striving for new groundbreaking research, guided only by their own, uncorrupted interests. As the sociology of scientific knowledge literature shows, this is just another ideological construction. As much as a prescriptive system of scientific ethos tries to uphold that ideal, in concrete socio-cultural settings, it is a contested terrain, constrained by open pressure, subtle intrusions of changing social values, and individual ambitions. It is possible to have this kind of research at a small scale as in The Interpretive Turn, but this kind of research will not continue if the involved researchers do not have some power and financial support to educate PhD students, who will continue the stream of research. Otherwise, interpretive research would disappear when the researchers who carry the paradigm die, to paraphrase Kuhn (1962/1970). So it is not possible to stay in this isolated position if this kind of research is to continue in consumer research. Here, the integration of the social field with the knowledge/research complex becomes relevant. From a sociology of scientific knowledge perspective, two problems arise: what is the best strategy for the management of science, and what are the internal consequences for the production of scientific knowledge? From a strategic standpoint, the Arnould and Thompson tendency to focus on changing individual researcher’s behaviour presupposes homogeneity of interest and orientations. This overlooks the heterogeneity of the specific constellations of institutional, disciplinary and national cultural layers and the individual researcher’s negotiation of value tensions. But even a strategic success can be damaging in terms of the internal impact of research. The consequences of the non-integrated realpolitik of CCT2 could be very positive from a short-term perspective. There would be better resources and research would probably be expanded. But the long term consequences are much more negative, since a stream of research needs to come up with new ideas and research topics. A close connection to the power position could easily determine what kind of ideas should be studied and with what kind methods. An indication for this widespread concern is the debate on the commercialization and the commodification of scholarship. Even if we don’t agree with a necessarily antagonistic relationship between the values of knowledge and power, the required situational assessment is a symptom for mutual impact.

Reflexive research is the pragmatic position, striving for idealistic mentality among the researchers. It is a position with a focus on pragmatic aspects of research, but at the same time leaving room for the anarchistic nature of groundbreaking research. Reflexive research is characterized by a meta-level, in which the scientific culture can openly reflect upon how to deal with the conflicting reality of research.

References
Arnould, E.J. and Thompson, C.J. (2008), The story is verified by email correspondence with Arnould and Thompson, March 2008.


Greimas, A.J. (1987), On Meaning: Selected Writings, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Greimas, A.J. (1990), The Social Sciences: A Semiotic View, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.


