

Enactments of Expertise

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Abstract

Every society recognizes expertise, and anthropologists have long documented the culturally and historically specific practices that constitute it. The anthropology of expertise focuses on what people do rather than what people possess, even in the many circumstances where the former is naturalized as the latter. Across its many domains, expertise is both inherently interactional, involving the participation of objects, producers, and consumers of knowledge, and inescapably ideological, implicated in the evolving hierarchies of value that legitimate particular ways of knowing as “expert.” This review focuses on the semiotics of expertise, highlighting four constitutive processes: socialization practices through which people establish intimacy with classes of cultural objects and learn to communicate that familiarity; evaluation, or the establishment of asymmetries among people and between people and objects; institutionalization, wherein ways of knowing are organized and authorized; and naturalization, or the essentialization of expert enactments as bodies of knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The ethnographic record demonstrates that every society recognizes forms of expertise. The very practice of ethnography entails mapping and representing social distributions of knowledge, including the sites where modes of expertise are practiced and deployed. After all, the key informant is a kind of cultural expert on whom the anthropologist—as another kind of cultural expert—has long relied. From the canoe technologists of Melanesia (see Malinowski 1922, Mead 1928, Mishkin 1937, Scoditti 1982) to the medical specialists of the contemporary United States (see Dumit 2004, Saunders 2008), experts have taught anthropologists about (*a*) socialization practices such as training and apprenticeship; (*b*) cultural processes of evaluation, validation, and authentication; (*c*) the institutionalization of ways of seeing and speaking into authorized and authorizing domains; and (*d*) the naturalization of specified activities as specialized knowledge.

In an age defined by mass dissemination and proliferation, many contemporary anthropologists have turned to the study of how different kinds of expertise encounter each other (e.g., Choy 2005; Epstein 1996; Good 2004, 2007; Gusterson 1996; Haviland 2003; Hess 2007; Hogle 2002a,b; Irwin & Jordan 1987; Rapp 2000) and work to anticipate, or at least keep pace with, the world's revolutions (e.g., Fortun 2001, Holmes & Marcus 2005, Kelty 2008, Knorr Cetina 1999, Lakoff 2008, Nader 1996, Ong 2005, Redfield 2006, Strathern 2006, Timura 2004). Indeed, with the emergence of what Urban (2001) calls a “metaculture of newness,” in which social totality is achieved through the aggregation of “mass-mediated individual performative epiphanies” (Lee 2001, p. xv), contemporary social experience is simply unimaginable without expertise to categorize and rank these responses. As it turns out, the enactment of expertise not only determines the value of cultural objects, whether mental states, real estate, wine, disease, or gold; it also confers value on those who interact with these objects, including the experts so enacted.

This review begins with the simple premise that expertise is something people do rather than something people have or hold (compare Collins & Evans 2002, 2007). From the medico-religious (Lambek 1993, Simpson 1997) to the biogenetic (Brodwin 2002, Rapp 1988, Simpson 2004), expertise is inherently interactional because it involves the participation of objects, producers, and consumers of knowledge. Expertise is also always ideological because it is implicated in semistable hierarchies of value that authorize particular ways of seeing and speaking as expert. Expertise is arguably the exemplar of what Silverstein calls “second order indexicality” (1992, 2003)—that is, historically constituted and contingent metadiscursive practices (e.g., rationalizations, evaluations, diagnoses) that mediate between would-be experts and some set of cultural goods. These practices are routinized and organized as institutional boundaries are forged between different ways of knowing the very same thing, spawning the social configurations we call profession, craft, and discipline (Abbott 1988, 1995; Brenneis 1994; Gal & Irvine 1995).

Foucault has influenced many contemporary anthropological accounts of expertise (e.g., Fassin & D'Halluin 2005, 2007; Gusterson 1996; Ilcan & Phillips 2003; Lakoff 2005; Ong 2005; Schwegler 2008). These studies consistently assert that expertise manifests in power relations that are both repressive and productive, and it reproduces these relations when expressed by disciplined social actors (i.e., experts and laypeople). For instance, in her study of public health officials in Brazil, Wayland draws on Foucault to suggest that “[t]hose who control valued knowledge are viewed as experts, and expertise often conveys authority” (Wayland 2003, p. 484; compare Scott 2009). And in his study of East German journalists, Boyer draws on Foucault's theorization of discipline as a positive economy—in which bodies are made docile to exploit the resource of time—as a “useful way of thinking about the decorporealized body of the professional intellectual” (2005a, p. 250; see also

Boyer 2005b). Foucauldian studies have repeatedly demonstrated how expert opinion, as a poignant intersection of knowledge and power, both formulates and compels individual bodies and populations. Yet, to the extent that anthropologists follow Foucault (1984) in jettisoning an archaeological method, which reconstructs intradiscursive relations in favor of a genealogy devoted to plotting “the hazardous play of dominations” (p. 83) across vast spans of time and space, we risk overlooking the dynamics of expertise-in-practice that we are especially well positioned to document and analyze. Indeed, to attend archaeologically to the “anticipatory power of meaning” (p. 83) is also to appreciate the way that expertise emerges in real-time interaction as actors and institutions struggle to author and authorize powerful texts that will be read as such by others (see Redfield 2006).

After all, to be an expert is not only to be authorized by an institutionalized domain of knowledge or to make determinations about what is true, valid, or valuable within that domain; expertise is also the ability to “finesse reality and animate evidence through mastery of verbal performance” (Matoesian 1999, p. 518). Accordingly, this review approaches expertise as intensively citational institutional action, rather than as a powerful cache of individual knowledge that is simply expressed in social interaction. To this end, I highlight how expert actors use linguistic and metalinguistic resources—such as jargons and acronyms—and poetically structure real-time interaction. I also address the role of gesture, uniforms, and other visual media in the enactment of expertise (Goodwin 1994, 1996; Matoesian 2008).

Given the ubiquity of expertise, and the richness and range of anthropological treatments of it, I have organized this review around four conceptual themes, each of which contributes to an understanding of expertise as accomplished, or enacted, through linguistic practices. The first section addresses socialization processes, such as training and apprenticeship, by which people learn to act as experts. Apprenticeship invariably involves a period of intensive interaction with objects of knowledge, as well as with

other people who have putatively mastered those objects. However, the reader will see that people become experts not simply by forming familiar—if asymmetrical—relationships with people and things, but rather by learning to communicate that familiarity from an authoritative angle. An emphasis on semiotic mediation is carried through the discussion of evaluation and authentication, to which the second section of the review is devoted. Considering the relative agency of people, both expert and lay, and the objects of knowledge they engage, I highlight the collaborative labor involved in sustaining expertise in situated practice. A third section on institutionalization and authorization focuses on how certain ways of knowing come to be institutionally authorized as expert, and the fourth section touches on the naturalization of expertise by posing the following question: Why are the highly collaborative and institutionally organized dynamics of expert enactment so often understood as a property that elite individuals have or hold within them? Rather than concluding that “actual social relations are obscured or misrecognized by the actors” (Irwin & Jordan 1987, p. 319; see also Bourdieu & Johnson 1993), I underscore the basic premise of the review. That is, expertise requires the mastery of verbal performance, including—perhaps most importantly—the ability to use language to index and therefore instantiate already existing inner states of knowledge. In conclusion, I offer methodological principles for studying expertise as enactment.

APPRENTICESHIP, TRAINING, AND SOCIALIZATION

If expertise is enactment, it is also fundamentally a process of becoming rather than a crystallized state of being or knowing. So although certain forms of expertise may be culturally cast as natural or spiritual endowment, it is clear that one can learn to be an expert. Indeed, the development of expertise generally begins with a period of training, which takes an array of forms cross-culturally as well as across

historically specific domains of expertise. Consider Lave's study of Liberian tailors. It documents the five-year period during which apprentices work in master tailors' shops, learning the process of garment production in reverse. Each step, Lave shows, involves "the unstated opportunity to consider how the previous step contributes to the present one. . . [an] ordering that minimizes experiences of failure" (1997, p. 21; see also Lave 1988).

This is one of several case studies reviewed by Lave & Wenger (1991), in their efforts to "rescue the idea of apprenticeship" from the notion that it is an outmoded form of training and theorize it as part of a ubiquitous cultural process of "situated learning" (p. 29; see also Hanks 1991). Frink (2009) has recently responded by rescuing a so-called subsistence technology—namely, herring processing in Native Alaska—and outlining how mastery is acquired through a lifetime of training in a gender- and age-stratified apprenticeship system. My own current work documents that apprenticeship is alive and well in the rapidly proliferating therapeutic field of Motivational Interviewing. In this case, learning to expertly incite behavioral change in others commonly involves observing experienced practitioners conduct video-taped, simulated sessions with client-actors, practicing the technique through a variety of role-playing exercises, and carefully evaluating one's audio-taped sessions with clients alongside an experienced trainer, who elaborately codes the recorded work (E.S. Carr, forthcoming).

The social organization of training has arguably been of enduring interest to anthropologists, at least since Malinowski (1964 [1922]; see also Scoditti 1982) described the range of skills that one must master to initiate a ritually and technically sound canoe—from the selecting, felling, and transporting of trees to the recitation of rites during the piecing together of ribs, poles, and planks. Contemporary technologies continue to galvanize the cultivation and dissemination of expertise. Saunders (2008) illustrates how diagnostics are cultivated at computerized tomography (CT) viewboxes around which clinicians huddle, ritually transforming

seemingly mysterious images into powerful evidence that testifies to, among other things, the viewers' developing expertise. Indeed, becoming an expert invariably involves building an intimate relationship with a valuable class of cultural objects (Knorr Cetina 1999, Lee & Roth 2003, Urban 2001). Yet because a single kind of object, such as a CT scan, can play a number of roles across institutional contexts (see Dumit 2004)—generating opportunities for would-be experts to distinguish themselves from laypersons and novices along the way—apprenticeship involves learning how to define and frame, as well as to interpret and engage objects in an expert way.

Because being socialized as an expert involves establishing a deliberate stance in relation to a set of culturally valued or valuable objects, novices must master a register—that is, a recognizable, if specialized, linguistic repertoire that can include technical terms or acronyms, specific prosodic practices, and non-verbal signs such as facial expressions or gestures (Agha 1998, 2001, 2007; Silverstein 2003, 2004, 2006). For instance, to "constitute themselves as hair experts," students in an African American cosmetology school learn "to distinguish between specialized and lay hair terminology" (Jacobs-Huey 2003, p. 277); they also distinguish their knowledge from that of lay-clients by "renam[ing] commonly known black hair care procedures" (p. 278). Indeed, jargons are often not attempts to guard or obfuscate expert knowledge, as many have suggested, but are rather a way to signify it. Consider that in the course of American medical training, "[n]ovices simulate expertise by projecting a sense of authority or control over information and motor skills and especially by the way they use particular words, asking questions while trying to achieve a poised demeanor and speech delivery to mask any anxiety or uncertainty about what is happening" (Cicourel 2001, p. 68; compare Bosk 2003). Given such examples, we can define an expert register as a way of speaking that is recognized as a special kind of knowledge and manifests in interaction as such.

Indeed, socialization into a domain of expertise involves learning how to control interactional texts as much as determining the content of denotational ones. That is, apprentices learn not only what to say in representing the objects of their expertise, but how to say it as well. This point is keenly illustrated in Mertz's examination of "learning to think like a lawyer," which involves pragmatically mobilizing legal texts, such as case law, rather than simply learning its "content" (1993, 1996, 2007). Mertz further argues that the pedagogical routines of American law school classrooms—in which professors successively engage students in intensive dyadic exchanges—are structured attempts to undermine the semantic-interpretive orientation with which students enter the classroom. Not unlike law students and beauty school students, Motivational Interviewing novices commonly engage in elaborate role-play exercises to anticipate future interactions with clients and practice expert communication, as do magicians' apprentices (Jones & Shweder 2003).

Of course, the degree to which socialization as an expert involves mastering verbal routines, whether ritual incantation or diagnostic explication, or mobilizing lexical resources such as jargons, depends on local ideologies of language, as well as the specific form of expertise at stake. In the medical domain, Cicourel (1981, 1995) finds that attending physicians do not directly observe medical students interviewing patients and interpreting their symptoms; instead, attendings determine the degree to which novices have acquired expert knowledge by evaluating the oral presentation of their work. By contrast, in studying Mexicano woodcarvers in Cordova, Briggs (1986) quickly learned of a form of expertise transmitted not through verbal exchange between masters and apprentices, but instead through observation, internalization, and imitation of patterned behaviors.

Even when people engage in training routines that ritually transform them into experts, and often also officially render them as such by bestowing various credentials (e.g., diplomas, badges, passwords, titles, offices, keys, uni-

forms), they must consistently act as experts if they are to maintain their status. As Lambek's (1993) study of ritual experts in Mayotte makes clear, there is no precise threshold between being a novice and expert, nor does expertise entail an irreversible progression. Because expertise is always subject to public evaluation, "the appellation is [not] in most cases absolute; rather it is relative and situational, a matter of social context" (p. 86; see also Hogle 2002a). And because "attributing minimal or natural expertise to someone assumes training and experience associated with a title and a prior credentialing process" (Cicourel 2001, p. 27), a crucial question arises: How is one's training actively invoked across the communicative events in which expertise is at stake? Indeed, whether referencing the sites of one's training, carrying credentialing initials before or behind one's family name, or hanging certificates bearing institutional affiliations on one's walls, would-be experts must continuously work to authenticate themselves as experts as well as to authenticate the objects of their expertise.

AUTHENTICATION AND EVALUATION

As Urban (2001) notes, experts are people who make it their business to become intimate with classes of culturally valuable things that are relatively inaccessible or illegible to laypeople, such as art (Myers 1994), weapons (Cohn 1987, Gusterson 1996, Masco 2006), wine (Silverstein 2004, 2006), mental states (Carr 2010, Lakoff 2005, Smith 2005, Young 1997), cosmological conditions (Hanks 1996, Lambek 1993), brains and bodies (Bosk 2003, Dumit 2004, Rapp 1999, Sardon 2008), endangered or proper language (Gal 1995, Hill 2002, Silverstein 1996), hair (Jacobs-Huey 2003), odds (Modell 1989), and gold (Putnam 1973). As reviewed above, establishing this intimacy, as well as a way to relay it publicly, is part of learning to be an expert across diverse terrains of practice. To the extent that practitioners are successful in establishing their expertise, both in the actual process of training and their continual real-time

evocation of it, they can create hierarchies and distinctions by determining the qualities, authenticity, or value of the objects within their purview. This holds true whether experts base their assessments on the intrinsic qualities or on future circulations of the things they evaluate, with the latter increasingly serving as the basis of the former in conditions of late capitalism.

In line with what Bateson (2000) provocatively identified as the fundamental “error in the thinking and attitudes of Occidental culture” (p. 498)—that is, the privileging of mind over matter—it is all too easy to presume that expertise is a matter of people interpreting, establishing the value of, and thereby managing, if not totally mastering, the objects of their expert interest. However, as some anthropologists have elegantly shown, the culturally ascribed qualities of the things that engage experts profoundly shape the manifestation of expertise (e.g., Lambek 1993). For instance, in line with the Latourian impulse to assign agency to objects (see especially, Johnson 1988; Latour 1988, 2005; compare Abbott 1995, p. 323), Dumit (2004) asserts the existence of “expert objects”—such as brain scans—that actively confer opportunities for the enactment of expertise. He further suggests that “objects. . . that require help in interpreting even though they may appear to be legible to a layperson” (p. 112; see also Dumit 2000) may be particularly powerful. Other anthropologists of science have averred that objects thought to be obscure or inaccessible to laypeople—such as nano-materials (Kelty 2008) or beamtimes (Traweek 1988)—generate high degrees of expert agency. Their ethnographic accounts therefore represent such things, along with the people who interact with them, as expert actors.

Likewise, we should consider how things that everyone is thought to have—such as language or mental states—are expertly translated by those who claim to have special knowledge of them (see, for example, Carr 2010, Gal 1995). Indeed, some objects of expertise are widely, if not universally, accessible but still offer elite opportunities for authorized people

to enact expertise. In such cases, distinctions about the relative legibility of these objects are commonly drawn. For example, in cultures in which gender is thought to be a natural property of individual bodies (compare Strathern 1988, Rosaldo 1982), to enact gender expertly is to decipher and deploy it in an especially reflexive way (Hall 1995, McCloskey 1999; compare McCloskey 1992). Similarly, in the case of mainstream American addiction treatment, therapists’ efforts to help and heal their clients, and establish themselves as experts, commonly hinge on their claim that they intimately know the inner states that their clients, as addicts, deny (Carr 2006, 2010; compare Lakoff 2005, p. 85). Other kinds of clinical expertise cast clients as experts of their own bodily experience, while retaining the authority to read that experience as evidence.

If anthropological accounts of the relative agency of expert persons and expert objects differ, so do theories about the role of laypeople in the enactment of expertise. After all, expertise is not only a relationship between a special kind of person and a special kind of thing. It is also a relationship between at least two types of people: experts and laities. Knorr Cetina (1999) calibrates these two orders of expertise by suggesting that the expert’s discernment of objects necessarily involves the creation of distinctions among people; she considers the role of expert colleagues as well, writing, “Experts are those who have learned to engage with objects in reliable trust relationships and who, therefore, are trusted by colleagues who cannot engage in those relationships directly” (p. 135). However, realizing one’s self as an expert can hinge on casting other people as less aware, knowing, or knowledgeable. Indeed, expertise emerges in the hoary intersection of claims about types of people, and the relative knowledge they contain and control, and claims about differentially knowable types of things. As Mitchell (2002) argues, the rise of modern Egyptian technological expertise would have been impossible without the figuring of the Egyptian peasant as nonintellectual Other.

The enactment of expertise can also involve the performance of uncertainty. Consider Bergmann's (1992) fascinating case of the clinicians who, in performing intake interviews in a mental hospital, frame their own knowledge of the patient and her troubles as uncertain and in need of confirmation. This strategy, Bergmann argues, works to elicit a firsthand account from the patient, which is of course both the function of the intake process and the initiation of the diagnostic processes that constitute the "uncertain" clinicians' expertise (see Peräkylä 1995).

This example illustrates that successful enactments of expertise hinge on the would-be expert's ability to establish an interpretive frame through which to view that object. As Silverstein (2004, 2006; see also Goodwin 1994, Urban 2001) points out, it may seem that evaluative principles are read directly off things, but people emerge as more or less expert not in unmediated relationships to culturally valued objects (such as wine), but instead through the discursive processes of representing them (such as wine talk). Thus, it is not simply in the realm of the culinary that "you are what you say about what you eat" (Silverstein 2004, p. 644; compare Bourdieu 1984). Ayurvedic experts in India differentiate themselves from quacks not through direct interaction with patients or their illnesses, but through metadiagnostic activities that painstakingly differentiate authentic and inauthentic ways of knowing (Langford 1999). Similarly, Mayan shamanic expertise is enacted during exorcism events—and exorcism is thereby achieved—through the citing and reworking of other shamans' prayers (Hanks 1996). Another explicitly citational realm of social practice—that is, social scientific expertise—follows suit. Bauman & Briggs (2003) demonstrate the metadiscursive nature of late-seventeenth-century European regimes of intellectual authority, which were constituted by ways of speaking about ways of knowing. And, as Gal & Irvine (1995; see also Gal 2006) note, the achievement and maintenance of our academic disciplines rely on the

same kind of metalinguistic practices that differentiate languages from dialects. (I suppose, then, the writing of an *Annual Review* article is a particularly poignant case in point, at least for this putative expert).

As Silverstein's discussions of Mr. A and Mr. B demonstrate so well (1998, 2003, 2004), would-be experts work to establish their expertise not so much by trying to out-denote each other, in verbal or written displays of what they know about an object of mutual interest. Instead, they must engage in less predictable, real-time performances, which often take the form of one-upmanship (Silverstein 2004). The enactment of expertise may involve talking to even more than it entails talking about. This point is demonstrated with particular acuity by linguistic anthropologists who carefully attend to the role of gesture in the enactment of expertise. Consider Matoesian's (2008) brilliant demonstration of how a doctor, acting as an expert witness, trumps a prosecuting attorney not by providing incontrovertible evidence that satisfies the referential demands of the prosecution's increasingly insistent questions. Instead, the doctor emerges as an expert through a careful calibration of verbal and bodily conduct—including lip protrusions, "thinking face displays," and more or less dramatic shakes of his head—which gears the questioning in a more favorable direction.

Matoesian's work—especially when read alongside Mertz's (1993, 1996, 2007) discussion of law students and Philips's (1991) ethnography of American judges—suggests that institutional contexts (such as courtrooms) and professional affiliations (such as doctor and lawyer) do not magically or automatically confer expert statuses onto their inhabitants. It is arguably only when we rigorously attend to real-time semiotic interaction—where struggles between law, science, magic, and medicine play out in improvisational and contingent if always already conventionally controlled ways—that we can also discern just what role institutions play in the organization, authorization, and enactment of expertise.

INSTITUTIONS AND AUTHORIZATION

As long as anthropologists have been interested in the institution of training and apprenticeship, we have also recognized how evaluative and authenticating practices are institutionally authorized. After all, anthropologists know that institutions not only host ritual ceremonies, such as ordinations and graduations; institutions also provide certificates, badges, feathers, tools, technologies, special clothing, and credentialing letters (e.g., PhD) that signify these expert rites of passage in future expert enactments. Indeed, well after novices have been officially rendered experts by the institutions that sponsored their training, the emblems of expertise provide access to other institutional sites and the equipment, artifacts, and objects contained therein (Cicourel 2001, p. 27).

Expertise also links institutions, paving the way for things to travel by assigning them meaning and value. For example, Myers (1994) examines how art criticism deals in aesthetic, ethnic, and monetary value, categorizing things as art or its reproductions and derivatives and shaping the markets in which these things flow. One need only to watch a single episode of “Antiques Roadshow” to see how appraisers subsume individual distinctions in an elaborate system of values (authenticity, biographical history, cultural origin, aesthetic beauty, market worth, etc.), thereby institutionalizing them. In doing so, appraisers also project themselves, the objects they evaluate, and the laypeople who possess them far beyond the sets of the Public Broadcasting System.

Some have argued that institutions, such as professions, schools, and disciplines, provide boundaries between ways of knowing the very same object (Abbott 1988, 1995; Douglas 1986; Hogle 2002b). In these accounts, the role of institutions is not just to cultivate and authorize certain knowledge practices, but also to organize them. Others have further demonstrated that institutions’ ability to organize ways of knowing rests on their ability to manage ways of speaking by providing participants with semi-

otic resources (Carr 2009; Collins 2008; Gal & Irvine 1995; Goodwin 1994; Mehan 1996; Silverstein 2004, 2006). As Goodwin (1994) incisively notes, “Discursive practices are used by members of a profession to shape events in the domains subject to their professional scrutiny. The shaping process creates objects of knowledge that become the insignia of a profession’s craft: The theories, artifacts, and bodies of expertise that distinguish it from other professions” (p. 606).

In line with Matoesian’s analysis of expert testimony (2008), Goodwin further suggests that it is not the law that decides what counts as expertise. Nor do institutions—such as professions—automatically instantiate a prestructured power dynamic just because they can rest their claims on a collective, already always authorized Us versus a singular, lay You (see Desjarlais 1996). Institutions also help people to cultivate and strategically deploy what Goodwin calls “professional vision”: the interpretive frameworks that allow, for instance, testifying police to expertly transform the brutal beating of Rodney King into discrete professional responses (e.g., kicks, clubbings, punches) or archaeologists to determine the color of the artifacts they retrieve in line with the categories provided by Munsell.

Thus, if we are indeed what we say about what we eat, “interested institutional forces are, however, hard at work to give directionality to this process, seeking to establish a solid foundation of ‘true’ worth of the object by naturalizing (essentializing) hierarchies of distinctions” (Silverstein 2006, p. 485). Indeed, institutions trade in “onomic” knowledge, terms that simultaneously index specialized areas of cultural knowledge and special types of people (p. 485). Those who participate in status-conferring institutions have greater access to and experience with -onomic knowledge, which suggests a fundamentally linguistic division of knowledge and labor (Putnam 1975; compare Barth 2002) as much as a prestructured organization of more-or-less knowing people in relation to more-or-less knowable things. It is in this sense that we

can say that “professional vision is perspectival, lodged within specific social entities, and unevenly allocated” (Goodwin 1994, p. 626), which holds true across the many terrains of expertise that anthropologists study.

Consider what Mehan (1996), in his studies of special education meetings among parents, teachers, and school psychologists, calls “stratifying registers of representation” (p. 268). Given these parties’ competing versions of a particular child, Mehan asks why it is that the technical discourse of the psychologist, which defines the child as “learning disabled,” is never called on to clarify its terms. By way of an answer, Mehan suggests that “the psychologist’s discourse obtains its privileged status because it is ambiguous, because it is shot full of technical terms, because it is difficult to understand” (p. 269), thereby removing it from the grounds of the potential challenges. Negating the tendency of American speakers to make their intentions, ideas, and interests maximally understood, Mehan concludes that the expert register is allowed to speak for itself in the context of the special education meeting.

Furthermore, once an individual’s situated speech is “devoiced” as expert opinion (Mehan 1996), it can travel far from its interactional and institutional origin—a powerful phenomenon glossed by linguistic anthropologists in the twin terms of entextualization, or “the rendering of a given instance of discourse as text, detachable from its local context” (Urban 1996, p. 21), and contextualization, the accommodation of those texts to new institutional surrounds (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Carr 2010; Collins 1996; Gal 2005; Hanks 1996; Kuipers 1989; Mehan 1996; Philips 2010; Silverstein & Urban 1996; Urban 1992). Sometimes it is possible to track ethnographically how expert messages travel across institutional contexts or even to identify specific messengers. Yet perhaps what institutions do best is naturalize the expertise that has been produced in real-time interactions between putatively expert people and potentially valuable objects, allowing it to float across evermore empowering contexts (compare Foucault 1978, 1984). As Brenneis (1994)

points out, even the bureaucracies that we perhaps know best as anthropologists work not so much to organize, but instead to naturalize knowledge.

NATURALIZATION

In his own masterful project, *Keywords*, Williams (1985) explains that the word “expert”—derived from the Latin *expertus* (to try)—first appeared in the English language as an adjective and was closely related to the word “experience.” Ever suspicious of the transformation of verbs and adjectives into nouns, Williams historically anchors the rendering of “expertise” as a noun in the specialization and division of labor ushered in by the nineteenth-century industrialization of Western nations.

Although anthropologists have studied modes of expertise the world over, some have followed Williams in expressing a certain distrust of its contemporary manifestations, especially in highly industrialized and technocratic societies. Following Bourdieu (1984, Bourdieu & Johnson 1993), for instance, some have asserted that regimes of expertise obscure actual social relations, leading experts and laities alike to misrecognize the nature of things as well as their own interests in and evaluations of them (see, for instance, Irwin & Jordan 1987). Others have approached expertise as disciplined perception, showing how generations of experts differentially make sense of what they see given the ever-changing conditions of their labor. For instance, Masco (2004) argues that as the technical aspects of nuclear weapons research went underground and then virtual, weapons scientists suffered a “diminishing sensory experience” (p. 1) that blinded them to the political nature of their work.

Yet in documenting the production of a new sensibility, called “technoaesthetics,” which arises precisely out of the diminishment of outmoded sensory and technical returns, Masco’s work theoretically advances Cohn’s (1987) chilling portrait of the hypermasculinist jargon of defense intellectuals. In her brilliant study, Cohn focuses on a “technostrategic” language

that abstracts the realities of nuclear war by preventing certain questions to be asked or values to be expressed, thereby allowing defense intellectuals to escape the idea that they too could be the victims of their very own weapons. Suggesting the mystifying and even violent qualities of professional jargon, Cohn concludes, “the problem, then, is not only that the language is narrow but also that it is seen by its speakers as complete or whole unto itself—as representing a body of truths that exist independently of any other truth or knowledge” (p. 712; compare Latour & Woolgar 1986, Mehan 1996).

All modes of expertise arguably have coding systems, like jargons, that both produce categorical distinctions and erase the debate that inevitably went into producing them. Goodwin (1994) indicates as much in his study of those near and dear: professional archaeologists. Like Cohn, he suggests that a “coding scheme typically erases from subsequent documentation the cognitive and perceptual uncertainties” (p. 609) of expert actors and leads them to view the world (and its artifacts) in line with the perspective it establishes. And, much like Cohn implies in her comment about defense intellectuals’ investment not only in their jargon, but also in the grounding idea that truth is independent of its representation, Goodwin’s work suggests that the anthropology of expertise must always account for the language ideologies—that is, cultural constellations of ideas about the functions and effects of language—that organize and naturalize expertise. It is precisely the widely held ideas that language primarily functions to denote preexisting states and that those states are the inner property of speakers that so frequently naturalize expertise as something one has rather than something one does. My own ethnographic work on mainstream American addiction therapeutics suggests as much by documenting the semiotic processes that erase the real-time interactional routines by which people enact and establish expert knowledge of psychic interiors (Carr 2006, 2009, 2010).

Indeed, although telling people what they want to hear is precisely what experts do so well, as earlier sections of this review have prof-

fered, expertise is nonetheless widely naturalized as the simple speaking of what one knows. This practice is precisely why American politicians, as professionals who commonly and quite tellingly fall outside of the cultural recognition of expertise, work so hard to master the performance of inner reference (see Fliegalman 1993). Indeed, to emerge as an expert within a linguistic community that privileges the ability of language to denote already existing states, one must master the performance of what is putatively remembered in uncluttered and context-relevant ways (Cicourel 2001). So thank goodness, dear reader, you are not witness to the messy stacks of the much loved, copiously underlined, and even soiled papers and dog-eared books that surround me as I conclude my very own expert enactment.

CONCLUSION: METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF EXPERTISE AS ENACTMENT

The premise that expertise is not something one has but something one does has been demonstrated by anthropologists of science and technology (Fortun 2001, Knorr Cetina 1999, Latour 1988, Latour & Woolgar 1986), medical anthropologists (Briggs & Mantini Briggs 2003, Rapp 2000, Young 1997), and anthropologists who study professionals (Benner et al. 1990; Bishara 2008; Brodwin 2008; Goodwin 1994, 1996; Mehan 1983, 1993, 1996; Smardon 2008), apprentices (Jacobs-Huey 2003; Mertz 1993, 1996, 2007; Lave 1997), intellectuals (Bauman & Briggs 2003, Boyer & Lomnitz 2005), and ritual specialists (Lambek 1993, Hanks 1996). Anthropologists and ethnographers dedicated to showing the expertise of seemingly mundane or subsistence activities (Becker 1953, Boster & Johnson 1989, Frink 2009, Kataoka 1998, Srinivasan Shipman & Boster 2008) have lent much support to this thesis as well. Lambek (1993) nicely summarizes the bottom line of the anthropology of expertise when he notes, “to be recognized publicly as [a ritual specialist in Mayotte] is to perform as one,

to act the part, and to provide assistance in the appropriate manner when it is needed” (p. 87).

Across a wide array of sites, linguistic anthropologists have shown how expertise is enacted in the real-time course of communicative practice, which is never insulated nor isolated from institution and ideology. Indeed, a linguistic anthropological method assumes that culture and its many institutional forms and formulas manifest in semiotic interaction rather than simply controlling and containing it. It follows that linguistic anthropologists who study various forms of expertise are similarly driven to answer this question: What are the semiotic processes by which expertise is realized, and what cultural and linguistic resources are deployed in this inherently improvisational, interactional, and institutional work?

Studying expertise as semiotically accomplished allows us to reflect on our own expertise as anthropologists. Working in the long shadow of the colonial encounter, anthropologists should be especially aware of “the way in which professional coding schemes for constituting control and asymmetry in interaction” might be deployed “at the service of another

profession, thereby amplifying its voice and the power it can exert on those who become the objects of its scrutiny” (Goodwin 1994, p. 626). Furthermore, attending to how native ideas about communicative competence, as they inform our interviews and interactions in the field, is crucial. When Cordovan carvers answered Briggs’s questions about the skills involved in wood carving by handing him a piece of wood and a knife, they schooled him on and in a native mode of expert enactment (see Briggs 1986, 2007). They also provided Briggs the impetus to reflect on his native ideology of language, which was instantiated in his widely held belief that he could learn by asking before “learning how to ask.” Indeed, the semiotic study of expertise and its constitutive processes of socialization, evaluation, institutionalization, and naturalization must not be confined to the examination of verbal signs at the expense of visual ones. It must also understand that the acquisition of a way of representing things, on the one hand, and knowing things, on the other, should not be conflated and that the former is the proper methodological loci for the study of expertise as enactment.

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Contents

Prefatory Chapter

A Life of Research in Biological Anthropology
Geoffrey A. Harrison 1

Archaeology

Preindustrial Markets and Marketing: Archaeological Perspectives
Gary M. Feinman and Christopher P. Garraty 167

Exhibiting Archaeology: Archaeology and Museums
Alex W. Barker 293

Defining Behavioral Modernity in the Context of Neandertal and
Anatomically Modern Human Populations
April Nowell 437

The Southwest School of Landscape Archaeology
Severin Fowles 453

Archaeology of the Eurasian Steppes and Mongolia
Bryan Hanks 469

Biological Anthropology

Miocene Hominids and the Origins of the African Apes and Humans
David R. Begun 67

Consanguineous Marriage and Human Evolution
A.H. Bittles and M.L. Black 193

Cooperative Breeding and its Significance to the Demographic Success
of Humans
Karen L. Kramer 417

Linguistics and Communicative Practices

Enactments of Expertise
E. Summerson Carr 17

Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2010.39:17-32. Downloaded from www.annualreviews.org by University of Chicago Libraries on 12/26/12. For personal use only.

The Semiotics of Brand <i>Paul Manning</i>	33
The Commodification of Language <i>Monica Heller</i>	101
Sensory Impairment <i>Elizabeth Keating and R. Neill Hadder</i>	115
The Audacity of Affect: Gender, Race, and History in Linguistic Accounts of Legitimacy and Belonging <i>Bonnie McElbinny</i>	309
Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology <i>David W. Samuels, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and Thomas Porcello</i>	329
Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media <i>E. Gabriella Coleman</i>	487
International Anthropology and Regional Studies	
Peopling of the Pacific: A Holistic Anthropological Perspective <i>Patrick V. Kirch</i>	131
Anthropologies of the United States <i>Jessica R. Cattelino</i>	275
Sociocultural Anthropology	
The Reorganization of the Sensory World <i>Thomas Porcello, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and David W. Samuels</i>	51
The Anthropology of Secularism <i>Fenella Cannell</i>	85
Anthropological Perspectives on Structural Adjustment and Public Health <i>James Pfeiffer and Rachel Chapman</i>	149
Food and the Senses <i>David E. Sutton</i>	209
The Anthropology of Credit and Debt <i>Gustav Peebles</i>	225
Sense and the Senses: Anthropology and the Study of Autism <i>Olga Solomon</i>	241
Gender, Militarism, and Peace-Building: Projects of the Postconflict Moment <i>Mary H. Moran</i>	261

Property and Persons: New Forms and Contests in the Era of Neoliberalism <i>Eric Hirsch</i>	347
Education, Religion, and Anthropology in Africa <i>Amy Stambach</i>	361
The Anthropology of Genetically Modified Crops <i>Glenn Davis Stone</i>	381
Water Sustainability: Anthropological Approaches and Prospects <i>Ben Orlove and Steven C. Caton</i>	401
Theme I: Modalities of Capitalism	
The Semiotics of Brand <i>Paul Manning</i>	33
The Commodification of Language <i>Monica Heller</i>	101
Anthropological Perspectives on Structural Adjustment and Public Health <i>James Pfeiffer and Rachel Chapman</i>	149
Preindustrial Markets and Marketing: Archaeological Perspectives <i>Gary M. Feinman and Christopher P. Garraty</i>	167
The Anthropology of Credit and Debt <i>Gustav Peebles</i>	225
Property and Persons: New Forms and Contests in the Era of Neoliberalism <i>Eric Hirsch</i>	347
The Anthropology of Genetically Modified Crops <i>Glenn Davis Stone</i>	381
Theme II: The Anthropology of the Senses	
The Reorganization of the Sensory World <i>Thomas Porcello, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa and David W. Samuels</i>	51
Sensory Impairment <i>Elizabeth Keating and R. Neill Hadder</i>	115
Food and the Senses <i>David E. Sutton</i>	209
Sense and the Senses: Anthropology and the Study of Autism <i>Olga Solomon</i>	241

Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology
David W. Samuels, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and Thomas Porcello 329

Indexes

Cumulative Index of Contributing Authors, Volumes 30–39 507
Cumulative Index of Chapter Titles, Volume 30–39 510

Errata

An online log of corrections to *Annual Review of Anthropology* articles may be found at <http://anthro.annualreviews.org/errata.shtml>