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Summerson Carr on "Enactments of Expertise"

2010-06-10 17:53:00

By Eugene Raikhel

Every year the Annual Review of Anthropology publishes some of its reviews online prior to their print publication as a volume. This year they have made available an excellent review which will be of interest to many of our readers: "[Enactments of Expertise](#)" by [E. Summerson Carr](#), Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration, whose book, [Scripting Addiction: The Politics of Therapeutic Talk and American Sobriety](#), will be published in the fall by Princeton UP. Here's the abstract to the review:

"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," ([Carr 2010](#)).

Direct link to: E. Summerson Carr, 2010. "[Enactments of Expertise](#)." Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol 39.

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Raikhel E. Summerson Carr on "Enactments of Expertise". *Somatosphere*. 2010. Available at:
<http://somatosphere.net/2010/06/summerson-carr-on-enactments-of.html>.
Accessed October 6, 2011.

APA citation

Raikhel, Eugene. (2010). *Summerson Carr on "Enactments of Expertise"*. Retrieved October 6, 2011, from Somatosphere Web site:
<http://somatosphere.net/2010/06/summerson-carr-on-enactments-of.html>

Chicago citation

Raikhel, Eugene. 2010. Summerson Carr on "Enactments of Expertise". *Somatosphere*.
<http://somatosphere.net/2010/06/summerson-carr-on-enactments-of.html>
(accessed October 6, 2011).

Harvard citation

Raikhel, E 2010, *Summerson Carr on "Enactments of Expertise"*, *Somatosphere*. Retrieved October 6, 2011, from <<http://somatosphere.net/2010/06/summerson-carr-on-enactments-of.html>>

MLA citation

Raikhel, Eugene. "Summerson Carr on "Enactments of Expertise"." 10 Jun. 2010. *Somatosphere*. Accessed 6 Oct. 2011.<<http://somatosphere.net/2010/06/summerson-carr-on-enactments-of.html>>