The Authority of Discourse in Academic Communication: The Case of the Mead-Freeman Controversy

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I. Introduction

In his study of the development of geological knowledge and community in the nineteenth-century England, Rudwick (1985) describes some interesting aspects of the academic communication happening then. In major scientific societies influenced by the Baconian philosophy, empirically observed knowledge of “facts” was assumed to be indisputable, and free discussions of papers were generally discouraged at the meetings.

At the Royal Societies of both London and Edinburgh, a dignified silence greeted the delivery of papers; at the Linnean, discussion was further discouraged by not announcing before the meeting what papers were to be read; at the Astronomical, only factual comments were in practice permitted. Even at the Geological Society, where informal discussion must have been facilitated by the parliamentary arrangement of the meeting room, a certain caution about the custom was apparent in the description of what were soon famous in English scientific circles as good healthy arguments. (Rudwick 1985: 25)

However, the more factual data about the natural world accumulated, the
more necessary it became for each society to explore their discursive space for argument and interpretation, which eventually led to the development of theory. The Geological Society was not an exception. The following account by Rudwick tells us about how ambiguously the Society adapted its institutional arrangement for the more contextually open-ended communicative practices.

The Society was able to reconcile this tacit acceptance of the value of “opinions” with its continuing public repudiation of theorizing, because its argumentative discussions took place in conditions of relative confidentiality, behind the closed doors of the Society’s meeting room. Only the members and their guests could participate; the Society guarded jealously the privacy of what went on, forbidding any account of the discussions to be published. Only the anniversary addresses were exempt from running the gauntlet of argumentative discussion: only presidents were allowed to speak “six feet above contradiction.” No record was kept of the discussions at ordinary meetings, even for the Society’s own minute books: they were regarded as lying outside the official proceedings. (ibid., 25-26)

This example of the nineteenth-century academic communication is interesting for the present study in the sense that it highlights the significance of institutional control over discourse production, circulation, and reception. The scientific community then was going through a gradual change in the face of accumulated knowledge at hand and expanding vested interest, both individual and social, departing from the seventeenth-century self-contained gentlemanly culture (cf. Shapin 1994). In the field of geology, as Rudwick explains, the ongoing industrial development made it particularly attractive to new circles of people because of its practical value; its knowledge was regarded as useful for the discovery and supply of natural resources required.
for the development (Rudwick 1985: 4). Thus, in the process of shift in social as well as intellectual environment, the Society had to deal with new voices and boundaries by ordering discourse, and negotiating over what is factual, what is opinion, what is official, what is confidential, and what is public. In other words, it needed to explore its disciplinary “metadiscursive practices” (Briggs 1993).

The goal of academic communication is the making of knowledge, or disciplinary knowledge, while the practice of communication itself reinforces a particular institutional apparatus. Here, by institutional apparatus I mean not just a presence of academic community but a whole mechanism of arrangements for knowledge construction and authorization. Thus, the issue of what kind of discourse should be produced, where it should be circulated, and how it should be received becomes crucial for the operation of this apparatus, as well as knowledge making itself. In this paper, I will look at the Mead-Freeman controversy as a case in which such normative concerns constitute the integral part of its communicative process. The phenomenon of controversy itself is interesting for the study of communication, and this particular example in anthropology, despite its time lapse since its beginning (the year of 1983), offers an insightful perspective on academic communication as institutionalized discourse. As I will discuss in more detail below, the media played a critical role in this controversy, contributing to the creation of multiple voices and boundaries. The contextualization of Margaret Mead’s text, which was the official target of the controversy at the outset, eventually led to the negotiation over the “scholarly” and the “nonscholarly,” in addition to the politics of representing the ethnographic “Other.” Above all, Derek Freeman’s text was the very cause of the controversy, but it could not have happened without a specific circulation arrangement by his publisher. In this paper I will discuss the indexical field in which academics’ particular metadiscursive comments on the texts by Mead and Freeman were linked to their negotiation of social
meanings surrounding this seemingly chaotic controversy.

Metadiscourse is, literally, discourse about discourse. The notion has been employed widely across different disciplines, and its definition has been contextualized depending on each discipline’s focus, although the fundamental issue of reflexivity of discourse remains. In this regard, my use of the term is within the tradition of linguistic anthropology. Although the development of linguistic anthropology has been significantly based on the study of oral discourse, I find its semiotic conceptualization fundamental in the present study of written academic communication. When we rethink discourse as social practice, discourse itself is potentially metadiscourse. It is always open-ended to the intertextual web of past as well as future utterances (Bauman 2004). It is constantly in the process of “entextualization,” “contextualization,” “decontextualization,” and “recontextualization” (Bauman and Briggs 1990). However, because of its concrete fixed condition, written communication makes this dynamic process of discourse practice invisible. Actually, what makes it invisible is not merely its fixedness, but its broader institutional apparatus which mobilizes particular practices. For instance, focusing on the context of the nineteenth-century folklorists’ endeavor of text collection and representation, Bauman (1993) and Briggs (1993) discuss how specific metadiscourses explain and justify the “gap” and “fit” between original discourse practice and text products. Textual authority is constructed based on such “metadiscursive practices,” which are broadly defined as “the methods used in locating, extracting, and interpreting various forms of discourses” (Briggs 1993: 388). Although the context of this present paper is different from the context of those folklorists’ text representation in the nineteenth century, I find the notion inspiring for the examination of the Mead-Freeman controversy as academic communication. The practices here are not randomly organized ones but institutionally mobilized ones. As I will show below, when the academics commented on the texts by Mead and Freeman,
at issue were, on the message level, both Mead’ and Freeman’s discursive practices and their textual authorities. However, it is through such comments that the alignment of multiple voices and boundaries was negotiated, although in implicit manners. In other words, these comments became their own metadiscursive practices of creating social meanings.

II. The Mead-Freeman controversy as academic communication

By academic communication I mean both oral and written discursive practices contextualized within a specific academic institutional apparatus. It can be public, semipublic, or private, as with the nineteenth-century Geological Society’s case introduced earlier, because depending on its communicative goal and function it may or may not be part of a certain mechanism of knowledge construction and authorization. However, what makes contemporary academic communication distinct from non-academic communication is the prominence given to written communication, or text-based communication. Books, journal articles, and conference abstracts would be typical examples. The exploration of text-based communication is inevitable for the disciplinary development. The institutionalized ordering of such communication is crucial, as is reflected in the elaborated control surrounding, for instance, journal editorial policy, designated writing style, and related rules and ethics.

Here, involving the media, the Mead-Freeman controversy may not be called academic communication in the strict sense of the term. However, it was this very irreglar nature of the “controversy” that made the academics then keely aware of how discourses should be institutionally ordered. The beginning was the 1928 ethnographic text on Samoan adolescents by Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, and in 1983, fifty-five years later, Derek Freeman published his *Margaret Mead and Samoa: the Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth*, in which he claimed Mead’s description of Samoan adolescents and culture was wrong because of her
ideology of “cultural determinism.” According to Freeman, Mead idealized Samoan culture by depicting it as a stress-free paradise, which was to be contrasted with American culture full of pressures and problems, especially concerning young adolescents. If this had been what was all about, the picture would probably have been much simpler. However, it was another party, the media, that made this phenomenon beyond control of the academic community. After all, Margaret Mead (who had already died in 1978) was a public figure. It was the New York Times front page headline on Jan. 31, 1983 that declared “New Samoa Book Challenges Margaret Mead’s Conclusions” (The New York Times, Jan.31, 1983). Initiated by this, a series of public discursive spaces—newspapers, magazines, television talk shows, and even films—became the arena. The controversy suddenly became open to the public sphere. The academic community’s role was only partial in this particular picture. Let us look at the first paragraph in Robert Levy’s 1984 article “Mead, Freeman and Samoa” in Ethos.

Derek Freeman, in collaboration with Harvard University Press, stirred things up a bit last Spring with his attack on Margaret Mead and a variety of other more or less associated targets (Freeman 1983). Different consumers of anthropology got variously stirred up by different aspects of the strangely concocted book. The media, because they were threatened in one of their symbiotic celebrities. The Pacific Islanders were presented with yet another problem in trying to understand what the West had done with them and to them. The profession, or at least a few of its fragments, was upset (for the most part) for miscellaneous reasons, in keeping with its current miscellaneous state. (Levy 1984: 85)(underline mine)

As this Levy’s short but explicit narrative demonstrates, “the profession” is positioned as one of these multiple parties—or what he calls “consumers”—
in this map of alignment. As di Leonardo (1998) discusses, the popular reception of the texts by Mead and Freeman was composing a separate realm from the academic community, while its presence was significant in this controversy, leading to the academics’ implicit negotiation over the boundary between the scholarly and the nonscholarly.

In this paper, with this complex alignment in mind, I look at the communication happening within the academic community. In other words, I will not discuss the communication happening in the public sphere unless it is relevant. My interest in this paper does not lie in the assessment of the whole controversy, but rather in the illumination of how such a complex encounter of different positions was being entextualized in the discourses by those academics drawn to this controversy. My interest is in the examination of how the authority of discourse figures into this entextualization. Although I do not exclude other related texts when they are necessary for the purpose of analysis, I focus on three sets of essays published in three major journals between 1983 and 2000: American Anthropologist (1983), Canberra Anthropology (1983), and Journal of Youth and Adolescence (2000). Thus, by taking a limited but focused approach to the texts by the academics in these special editions, I take the first step to illuminate the significance of metadiscourse in this controversy.

Before moving on to the next discussion, let me briefly introduce the general features of the texts in each journal. Three journals are categorized into two groups based on the chronological order: the beginning and the closure of the controversy.


The texts in American Anthropologist consist of five reviews, preceded by the journal book review editor, Ian Brady’s short introduction. The authors are specialists in Samoa and the Pacific (Weiner, Schwartz, Holmes, Shore, Silverman). All these reviews are critical against Freeman’s book. In his
comment in *Anthropologist Newsletter* (1985), in response to Freeman's own claim, Brady ascribed this critical stance against Freeman to what was going in reality, not to his bias: “My selection was never conscientiously ‘against’ the degree of balance Freeman claims would have satisfied him…. the possibility for equal pro/con commentary was never there in the first place” (Brady 1985). Freeman’s own rejoinder to these reviews appeared separately in 1984 in the section of “Commentaries.” In the same year (a little later than the appearance of *American Anthropologist*), *Canberra Anthropology* issued two special volumes exclusively focused on the controversy. Both of them are entitled as *Fact and Context in Ethnography: The Samoa Controversy*. The first volume includes six texts by specialists in Samoa and the Pacific (Holms, Shore, Shankman, Schoefel and Meleisea, Strathern), and philosopher in social sciences (Jarvie)— Here, Homes and Shore appear again. They are also basically reviews of Freeman’s book, but each text is relatively longer than those in *American Anthropologist*. Only one review by Jarvie explicitly takes side with Freeman. The one by Schoefel and Meleisea is ambiguous; they are actually critical of both Mead and Freeman. The rest of four texts are directly critical against Freeman. All of these six texts comprise the first volume, which is followed by Freeman’s long rejoinder in the second volume.

(2) *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (2000)

All of the texts in two journals in 1983 were a direct reaction to Freeman’s first book, while five texts in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* were a reaction to Freeman’s second book in 1999, *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead*, which claimed that Mead was “hoaxed” by her Samoan informants. However, these five texts do not concern so much about Freeman’s new book any more but about the controversy’s closure. Although the “media event” had ended by the mid 1980s, a range of texts related to the controversy kept appearing in the 1990s, usually followed by Freeman’s
rejoinder. In this sense, each text in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* discusses the controversy and related issues from a retrospective point of view, as is expressed in the editor James E. Côté’s introductory article: “…the authors of this issue have set out to characterize and review key aspects of this controversy in an attempt to put an end to those things for which a reasonable consensus can be reached, and to put in context those issues that are likely to remain matters of opinion easily influenced by ideological preconceptions” (Côté 2000a: 526). The authors are Côté (two articles), Shankman, Murray and Darnell, and Caton. Freeman’s rejoinder to this special edition did not appear.

**III. Multiple authorities in academic communication**

At this point, I should clarify what kinds of authorities can be involved in text-based academic communication. It is important to realize that there are multiple sites of authorities involved in this realm, although they are interrelated and often overlap. Moreover, they cannot function independently in academic communication. However, it is analytically advantageous to give consideration to what kinds of authorities operate within the institutional apparatus. I argue that the multi-sitedness of these authorities is also the key to the schematic understanding of the controversy.

First of all, as a familiar case, let us consider the process in which a research article gets published and becomes an authorized academic text. Here, at least four sites of authorities are directly involved in this process: academic community, authorship, knowledge, and discourse. As a typical procedure, a submitted draft is reviewed and evaluated through a specific referee system organized by members of a specific academic community. After being accepted, the paper goes through a process of rewriting and editing based on this evaluation and related arrangements. Without this system organized by the academic community, the paper cannot acquire its textual authority. At the same time, importantly, through this system the
community itself reinforces its academic authority. This is the first site of authority.

Secondly, authorship becomes the site. Through this system of evaluation, the writer of the paper is given recognition as the “author.” His or her name is academically authorized. The name itself becomes the index of the work, which is open to future citations in other works.

The third site is knowledge. As is the case with the authorship, the presented knowledge in the paper is also authorized through the process of evaluation and acceptance. By constituting its intertextual relationships to previous knowledge, it becomes part of the accumulated disciplinary knowledge. Phenomena become transformed into the “truth.” It may consolidate its authority by being circulated, cited in other works, and indexically linked to further knowledge.

Finally, the fourth site is discourse. Without discourse this whole mechanism of authorization itself cannot operate. Discourse is the very vehicle of knowledge construction, as has been pointed out by Foucault (1980). It constitutes its regime and circulates power. Here, it should be stressed that this discourse itself becomes the object of knowledge construction at the same time. In other words, it is not merely the means of communication, but it becomes its own object through metadiscourse.

These four sites of authorities are crucial in the construction of knowledge. They are integral parts of the textual authority in academic communication. In other words, if a particular academic textual authority is questioned, these four sites of authorities are indexically questioned. More importantly, its institutional apparatus itself—a mechanism of arrangements for knowledge construction and authorization—is ultimately questioned. Here, I argue that this is what happened in the Mead-Freeman controversy. As the great number of its related published articles and commentaries suggests, this controversy encompasses a range of points of contention. Furthermore, the issue of ethnographic knowledge and authority in
anthropology is a rhetorically layered realm. And yet, this indexically-grounded scheme helps us understand the general patterning of foci among the published texts.

For example, let us consider these eleven texts (there are actually twelve texts, but Brad Shore’s texts in both journals is the same one, so this makes the total eleven) in both *American Anthropologist* (hereafter *AA*) and *Canberra Anthropology* (hereafter *CA*), as was mentioned above. Each text’s concern is indexically about all of these four authorities. For the analytical purpose, however, it is possible to group these texts into four categories based on which site of authority is foregrounded. First of all, as for the group focusing on the authority of academic community, there are Weiner (*AA*), Schwartz (*AA*) and Jarvie (*CA*). As for the group focusing on the authority of knowledge, there are Brady (*AA*), Holmes (*AA*), Shore (*AA*), Holmes (*CA*), Shankman (*CA*), and Schoeffel and Meleisea (*CA*). Most of these authors specialize in Samoan culture, so their foci naturally tend to be on ethnographic facts. I also include the discussion of theory and methodology in this category. As for the group focusing on the authority of authorship, that is, Mead, there is Strathern (*CA*). Finally, there is Silverman (*AA*), whose focus is the authority of discourse, although he is not explicit about it.

In the section that follows, I will discuss the indexical field in which the authority of discourse is linked to several metadiscourses. They mainly concern production, circulation, and reception of discourse. As has been just mentioned, there is only one text which focuses on discourse (i.e., Silverman in *AA*) among the reviews in 1983, while the issue of discourse is pervasive in most of these texts. It tends to be backgrounded, and yet it is actually surprisingly consistent. One of the reasons for this double bindedness is because discourse is the very basis of our epistemology as well as communication. It is often too basic to be discussed. In this regard, Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Marcus and Fisher (1986) made a great contribution
to the discipline by calling attention to the importance of discourse in the production of ethnographic knowledge. After the 1980s, anthropologists became more aware of the rhetoric of ethnographic writing, and many articles related to the Mead-Freeman controversy, as well as the above reviews, dealt with this issue, that is, the politics of cultural representation by taking a rhetorical point of view seriously. However, my focus here is more on the basic manners and arrangements of text-based academic communication, rather than the rhetorical issue of ethnographic presentation. I argue that they are as important as the politics of representation in the communicative process of this controversy. The authors’ critiques on Freeman’s text—also on Mead’s text—indexically reinforces the institutionalized ordering of academic written communication. These comments further function as their own metadiscourses for the negotiation of academic identity. They are subtle, but significant. The authority of discourse is effective within this institutionally motivated indexical field.

IV. Production of discourse

In his article in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (hereafter *JYA*), Shankman reviews the controversy, and discusses two reasons why it drew so much public attention. According to Shankman, the first reason was Freeman’s rhetorical use of scientific language, and the second reason was his selective use of literature. Through these strategies, Shankman argues, Freeman succeeded in constructing the superficial textual authority, which the media could not evaluate correctly (Shankman 2000: 541). In this section, I will explore the comments on these Freeman’s methods of discourse production.

(1) Tone of discourse

of his own self-aggrandizing scientific authority in contrast to Mead’s non-scientific as well as minimized authority. Also, more generally speaking, according to Marshall, the vocabularies Freeman uses to describe Mead and Mead’s work are “negative in tone” (Marshall 1993: 605). Although a range of adjectives are actually used to describe it, this “negative” aspect in Freeman’s discourse—both writing as well as speaking through the media—has been pointed out by others, and I regard such comments as constituting the important metadiscourse in this controversy. Freeman’s own framing of his work as a “scientific refutation” did not impress the academics as it did the media, while his specific tone of discourse did bother them, being interpreted as negative in general. It was against the norm of academic communication. Here, what kind of norm is at issue?

In the recent research on academic writing, several works have been discussing the pragmatic aspect in texts by paying attention to the interpersonal interaction between the author and the implied reader, or the academic community as audience. For instance, the authors in Markkanen and Schroder (1997) focus on the strategic use of hedging in academic communication. Myers (2002) also discusses its interpersonal aspect in terms of the notion of politeness, drawing on Brown and Levinson (1987). Knowledge claim is fundamentally, according to Myers, a face-threatening act, and a range of pragmatic strategies are inevitable for the persuasion of the academic community. Here, the author has to be attentive to the implied reader’s face, as well as his/her own face, for the effective persuasion in the act of knowledge claim. In this sense, reviewing others’ works involves their faces too (Johnson 1992). For instance, Caton in JYA makes an interesting comment on Freeman’s treatment of Mead’s work: “I have noted that Freeman never discussed the positive achievement of CA (Coming of Age in Samoa)” (Caton 2000: 604). Although the goal of the present study is not to analyze lack or misuse of politeness strategies in Freeman’s text, this interpersonal issue in text-based communication is relevant to the
academics’ interpretation of Freeman’s tone of discourse. They found it negative because it was against the norm of academic communication, which values politeness, as well as fairness. Now let us look at how each author comments on Freeman’s tone of discourse.

In his introduction in *AA*, Brady points out Freeman’s “military” tone in his criticism against Mead as follows:

Freeman’s approach to criticizing Mead has been less domestic than military. His call to battle has forced a fight over thought about Samoa and fieldwork, comparative ethnography, historical continuity and culture change, proper analytic language in ethnographic report, anthropology’s public image, and much more. (Brady 1983: 909) (underline mine).

This military frame was already made explicit by the use of the term “attack” in the New York Times on Jan. 31, as was introduced earlier in this paper. Especially, this frame indexically denies Freeman’s own framing of his book as a scientific, logical refutation. In this sense, the following excerpt from Schwartz in *AA* goes further than “military.”

The “media event” broke upon us some months before most of us had seen the Freeman book, precipitated by an unprecedented blitz of advance publicity, sensational, almost apocalyptic in tone. (Schwartz 1983: 919) (underline mine)

Let us look at Silverman’s text in *AA*. Here, the term he uses is “melodrama”

Anthropology has indeed come of age, in a Victorian kind of way, with the publication of Freeman’s Margaret Mead and Samoa: The
Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth. As critical reviews make clear, it does not make very much sense as a performance of intellectual history….But see and hear it as melodrama! (Silverman 1983: 944-945) (underline mine).

Silverman means the whole media event as melodrama, rather than simply Freeman’s tone of discourse, but his text is interesting in that it is not written in the conventional way; it is written as if it were a script, and with a extremely sarcastic tone. It is possible to say that this particular text organization indexically functions as Silverman’s criticism of Freeman’s text and tone. The meta-message is, it is not worth reviewing Freeman’s discourse in a conventional way of academic communication.

It is Shankman in CA that is explicit about the non-academic nature of Freeman’s discourse.

(Yet) his examination of her (Mead’s) motives and methods bordered on the personal, and the tone of statements in the book about 'the beguiling conceit' (1983: 301) of early cultural determinists like Mead did not contribute to the substance of academic discourse. (Shankman 1983: 38) (underline mine)

Also, in the same issue, Strathern writes as follows:

Coming of Age in Samoa ends with a glimpse of the moral possibilities opened up by appreciation of cultural diversity. Freeman’s future envisages a unified science of man. In his view, the results of Mead’s work, coming at the historical juncture they did, have been a block to its development. Is this what Margaret Mead is being punished for, throughout his cool and polite book? (Strathern 1983: 79) (underline mine)
“His cool and polite book” is, of course, sarcasm.

All these comments on Freeman’s metadiscursive practices function as these authors’ own metadiscourses on how discourse should be produced in the academically appropriate way, in contrast to the way done in the media, indexing furthermore what it is to be scholarly, being a member of the academic community.

(2) Quotation

The other issue of Freeman’s discourse production concerns his method of recontextualizing others’ works. The norm here is more of an ethnical nature; it is more about fairness than politeness. Shankman, whose statements I introduced earlier, is not alone in criticizing Freeman’s selective quotation. Murray and Darnell in JYA write as follows:

Although Freeman is very skilled at lifting adjectives from their referents and contexts, he has yet to produce a quotation from any anthropologist (living or dead) stating that he or she was convinced of cultural determinism by Mead’s Coming of Age in Samoa… (Murray and Darnell 2000: 558)

They further state:

His “method” when it comes to writing about anthropologists is to rip a word or phrase out of context and to repeat this word or phrase as an unambiguous endorsement of everything Mead wrote about Samoa. (Murray and Darnell 2000: 566)

Regarding how Freeman quotes Mead in his book, Shore in AA also writes, calling his approach “not fair”:
As for the general ethos that Mead attributes to Samoan society, it is not fair to quote only those passages of hers that stress gentleness or casualness, and to neglect her rather interesting claims in appendix 3 of *Coming of Age in Samoa*. (Shore 1983: 942) (underline mine)

Also, let us look at the comments by Holmes in *AA*. As a Samoan specialist who restudied Mead’s field, Holmes was often quoted by Freeman. He now complains about the way his words are quoted and used to support Freeman’s own argument:

> It is revealing that while I am cited or quoted 26 times in Freeman’s book the citations have mostly to do with my criticisms. My statements of corroboration are either ignored or discounted.… (Holmes 1983a: 931)

Holmes’ criticism does not only concern himself, but also other anthropologists’ works, saying, “Freeman’s book involves the most blatant misuse of the anthropological literature I have seen in recent years” (ibid., 933).

As is with the case of the tone of discourse, all these comments function as their metadiscursive practices for the reification of the norm of academic communication, and further what it is to be scholarly. In this sense, the following statement by Shankman in *JYA* is interesting:

> The result is that while Freeman’s work appears academically authoritative on first reading, it is only by returning to his sources and evaluating his use of them that we can judge the academic soundness of his arguments. The media are poorly equipped to referee the scholarly quality of Freeman’s work and typically have
not reviewed the accuracy of his presentation of Mead’s work. (Shankman 2000: 541) (underline mine)

Here, the meta-message is: “the media are poorly equipped,” but we academics are well equipped to evaluate Freeman’s discourse—and metadiscourse—correctly.

V. Circulation of discourse

The discussion so far has been looking at subtle yet direct metadiscourses on Freeman’s method of creating his textual authority. In this section, I turn to the issue of discourse circulation. First, let us take a look at the following comments made by Weiner in *AA*:

The sensationalism of the controversy, however, was not entirely a media creation. Harvard University Press’s prepublication publicity announced the book’s contents with equal sensationalism, and that publicity sparked the January 31 story. (Weiner 1983: 910)

What made the New York Times article sensational was the prepublication publicity because, at the point of Jan.31, Freeman’s book had not been published yet. Such a publisher’s arrangement is unconventional for academic texts. Thus, its consequences —“sensationalim” which Weiner calls it—led to a range of academics’ emotional reaction toward the press. In the case of Holmes in *AA*, he expresses his “disillusion” as follows:

I have also been greatly disillusioned by the action of a university press that I have long respected. The Harvard University Press promotion of this book involved virtually every shoddy trick known. Never before have I heard of an academic circulating bound page proofs of a forthcoming book so that a raging controversy would be
created to increase sales. (Holmes 1983a: 934)

Responding to the expressed criticism, Joy Pratt, the publicity director of Harvard University Press is reported to have made the following statement, as is quoted in Caton in JYA. Caton actually calls this Pratt’s statement “what may be an unprecedented response to the scholarly community it serves.” (Caton 2000: 593)

Academics don’t understand publishing… We have a responsibility to make money and generate sales for books as well as to publish books with something important to say…[Anthropologists] say it’s been known in the field for years that Mead made mistakes in interpreting Samoa, but the general public hasn’t known that. (Caton, 1990, p224) (Caton 2000: 593; also quoted in Shankman 1983)

The commodification of academic text is significant here. It is part of the public sphere, which the academics struggled to deal with in this controversy.

In his review article in The American Scholar, Rappaport (1986) writes that the anthropologists were angry not because of the content of the book, but because of the manner of the circulation arrangement; it was so different from the way they were used to. Rappaport’s perception is suggestive in the examination of the comments made by the academic authors here. At issue is their emotional reaction to the fact that academic discourse becomes out of control, that is, beyond the control of the academic community. But, what kind of control originally exists in terms of circulation? Here, let us look at Rappaport’s description closely. He talks about a kind of unspoken rule for the circulation of discourse in terms of pace and arrangement.

Anthropologists’ anger was at least as much a reaction to the manner
of the book’s publication as a reaction to the book’s contents. Accustomed to the sedate pace of academic disputation—at least a year, usually more like two, elapses between the publication of a book and the appearance of its reviews in the professional journals—and more or less comfortable in what they believed the world regards as exotic subject matter, anthropologists were astonished by the attention their discipline was suddenly receiving…. (Rappaport 1986)

It is interesting to see how consistently the academics talked about the ordering of discourse in this controversy. And it is not so difficult to understand that such metadiscourses were inevitable when their conventional way of communication was challenged. The emotionally loaded metadiscourses in this section are also about the negotiation of academic identity. But, here, it is more clearly the negotiation viz-à-viz the public sphere, which itself is composed of various vested interests and positions.

VI. Reception of discourse

As I discussed earlier, Freeman framed his text as a “scientific refutation” of Mead’s ethnographic work, but most academics found his approach not even scientific, problematizing his theoretical assumption, methodology, and also his rhetorical structure of argumentation itself. However, there is a view that the text could have been a “corrective” to the mythological quality of Mead’s portrait of Samoa as a stress-free, idyllic place. Shore in AA explains why he initially recommended, as a referee for Harvard University Press, that the book should be published. He is critical of the outcome after all, but comments on how the book could have been different from what it turned out to be. According to Shore, there were several problems with Mead’s text in 1928, which led to the popular mythologization of the South Seas in general as well as Samoa:
It is in light of the power of this popular mythology associated with Mead’s treatment of Samoa that I found Freeman’s popularly aimed account a very strong and useful corrective. (Shore 1983: 937)

He further writes:

The work (Freeman’s work) was clearly aimed at a nonscholarly audience for whom decades of anthropological evidence of a “darker” strain in Samoan life would not have been readily available. (ibid., 937) (underline mine)

Here, let us pay attention to Shore’s reference to Freeman’s targeted audience. It is interesting to see how the boundary between the scholarly audience and the nonscholarly audience is crucial for the expected reception of Freeman’s text. It is crucial not simply because this particular framing justifies Shore’s initial decision, but because Freeman’s textual authority is now placed outside the indexical field of academic communication. In this final section, I will look at how the academics negotiate, again, such a boundary, or the boundary between the scholarly and the nonscholarly through their metadiscourses on the norm of discourse reception. But, here, it is important to be attentive to the distinction between academic reception and popular reception.

When we turn to the realm of discourse reception in this controversy, the gap between the academic norm and the actual outcome in the public sphere is maximized. In other words, the popular reception of Freeman’s book was beyond the control of the academic community, as is illustrated by the media phenomenon itself. According to di Leonardo (1998), Freeman’s scientifically framed self-aggrandizing authority did not impress the academic community, while it fitted the conservative concerns of the public
sphere ongoing then. By contextualizing the popular reception of Freeman’s book in the 1980s’ new rightist politics, di Leonardo points out the significance of the image of Mead as a liberal “cultural determinist” which Freeman rhetorically constructs in his text (di Leonardo 1998: 298). This issue of rhetoric backgrounded by the politics then allows us to capture some complexity in the comments made on the academic reception of Mead’s text.

Mead’s text as popular literature was a widely shared consensus in the academic community. Her targeted audience was understood to be the popular, or nonscholarly audience. Here, it is interesting to see how Freeman himself backgrounded this issue. Strathern in CA points out this fundamental contradiction in his argument.

In his zeal to show how Mead’s ideas were propagated, Freeman sidesteps the interesting problem of dissonance between her popular and her anthropological renown. The popular response was to Mead’s fold model of ‘human nature’—this made her accessible to a huge public in the way theories of social acts and systems never could. But Freeman pretends too much when he equates this with a scientific acceptance of cultural determinism. (Strathern 1983: 79)

In order to maximize his own textual authority, Freeman needed to make this “dissonance” between Mead’s two personas ambiguous. The boundary between the scholarly and the nonscholarly is critical for the academics’ metadiscourses, and it is also the cornerstone in Freeman’s own argument. However, in the case of Freeman, it was necessary to background this boundary. Or, more concretely speaking, it was necessary to background the issue of who are the Mead’s targeted audience. Otherwise, the juxtaposition of his own text with Mead’s would automatically place his “refutation” outside the institutional apparatus of knowledge construction and
In this sense, the authors in *JYA* develop their discussions concerning how to frame Mead’s text. Mainly reacting to Freeman’s claim of her text being the influential professional literature, they reconsider the academic reception of the text, which is distinct from the popular reception. For instance, Shankman questions Freeman’s reception of Mead’s text as follows:

> There is no doubt that Mead’s first book, a popular book, was a bestseller by any standard. It was used in college courses, praised by scholars and and nonacademics alike, and became so well known that it remains a common reference point in public conversations. But was *CA* (*Coming of Age in Samoa*) a “sacred text” within the discipline? (Shankman 2000: 549) (underline mine)

Shankman further argues that it is not. It is a “popular text,” according to Shankman, but not a “sacred text,” never a kind of text that is seriously discussed and cited within the academic community. The review by Murray and Darnell also in *JYA* discusses this issue, illustrating how infrequently Mead’s text was cited in professional literature before the controversy—for instance, only 7.6% of 1970s citations (Murray and Darnell 2000: 569).

*Côté* in *JYA* discusses the reception of Mead’s text from a little different perspective, although the distinction between the scholarly and the nonscholarly is critical here too.

> There are contradictions in *CA* that have allowed Freeman to present a 1-sided interpretation that has been accepted among the general public…. But, academics should know how to read books written for the general public, and expect to have to resolve for themselves certain contradictions (and Mead did provide more information for academics in her Appendices). (Côté 2000b: 583-584) (underline
Côté also identifies Mead’s text as the popular literature, and yet he holds that the text itself is multilayered with different levels of information, for both the scholarly and the nonscholarly audiences. Thus, according to Côté, the scholarly audience “should know how to read” such texts. Actually, there have been several other articles (mainly Samoanists) which try to capture elements of ethnographic complexity entextualized within Mead’s text (e.g., Feinberg 1988; Holmes 1983a, 1983b). Significantly, these articles, being embedded in this controversy, are indexically linked to the norm of academic reception which Côté clearly expresses here. This particular metadiscourse on reception reinforces, again, the boundary between the scholarly and the nonscholarly, while it is interesting to realize that it makes Mead’s text remain within the indexical field of academic communication, despite its status as a popular literature.

VII Concluding remarks

In this study, I have explored the significance of metadiscourse in the Mead-Freeman controversy. The uniqueness of this controversy, mainly as a media phenomenon, led to specific metadiscursive practices of the academics involved in this communicative process. They were mainly about how discourse should be produced, circulated, and received. These metadiscursive practices are linked to the indexical field of academic communication as institutionalized discourse, of which the authority of discourse is the crucial as well as integral part. In other words, these institutionally motivated practices contribute to the reinforcement of the norm of academic communication, which is indexically linked to the boundary between the scholarly and the nonscholarly. Furthermore, this boundary is linked to the reinforcement of academic identity.

Discussing how the development of anthropology is inseparable from its
popular reception, or populization process, di Leonardo (1998) points out the importance of bridging between the scholarly and the nonscholarly. In this regard, the present study has shown how the Mead-Freeman controversy ended up reifying the boundary, instead of bridging it. The academics, in the middle of multiple voices and blurred boundaries between such voices, had to make explicit the boundary between the two realms. According to di Leonardo, the authority of anthropological representations is within “the symbiotic relationship between official scholarship and popular interpretation” (di Leonardo 1998: 21). However, the present study of metadiscourses in the Mead-Freeman controversy has illuminated a schism in this relationship: the authority of discourse, being heavily embedded in the institutional apparatus of academic communication, had to override the symbiosis, clarifying the distinction between what is to be scholarly and what is not. Postmodern thoughts have contributed to the decentering of textual authority by calling attention to such notion as dialogicality, for instance, while the issue is yet to be resolved, especially in the area of academic communication and its process of knowledge making.

Reference


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要約

アカデミックコミュニケーションにおけるディスコースの権威
ーミード－フリーマン論争の事例よりー\n
松本啓子

キーワード：Academic communication; Authority of discourse; Mead-Freeman Controversy; Metadiscourse

アカデミックコミュニケーションの目標は学問分野の知識構築であるが、一方で、コミュニケーションの実践自体が特定の学術制度とそうした制度におけるディスコースの組織化を強化し、更に、ディスコースの権威を強化する。本論は1980年代のアメリカ人類学におけるミード－フリーマン論争(Mead-Freeman Controversy)の過程に現れたメタ・ディスコース(meta-discourse)を取り上げて、これらの現象が当時の学問分野のコミュニケーションの規範をめぐるディスコースであったと同時に、学間分野のアイデンティティをめぐるディスコースであったことに注意を喚起する。

同論争はオーストラリアの文化人類学者デレック・フリーマンによって、亡きアメリカ人類学者マーガレット・ミードの古典的著作が批判されたことによって始まった。メディアや一般オーディエンスを巻き込み、アカデミックコミュニティの境界線を越えた同論争は特異な現象であった。フリーマン自身の挑戦的なコミュニケーションスタイルや出版社のセンセーショナルな宣伝方法が事の発端だったが、マーガレット・ミード自身のアメリカ社会における知名度に何よりの原因があった。いずれにしても、メディアを巻き込
んだ同論争は当時の人類学コミュニティがコントロールできない方向に広がっていたのである。本論では、こうした過程で組まれた三つの代表的学会誌の特集を取り上げ、当時の研究者のメタ・ディスコースに注目する。中でも、ディスコースがどのように書かれるべきなのかという「生産」(production)をめぐる（メタ）ディスコース、そして、どのようにオーディエンスに届けられるべきなのかという「循環」(circulation)をめぐる（メタ）ディスコース、更に、どのように読まれるべきなのかという「受容」(reception)をめぐる（メタ）ディスコースの意味を考える。結論としては、これらのメタ・ディスコースは当時の人類学コミュニティにおけるディスコースの組織化とその権威を再生産したと同時に、メディアや一般オーディエンスとの狭間で「アカデミックであること」の意味を再構築したのである。アカデミック・アイデンティティの構築から、ディスコースをどう組織化し、どう権威づけるのかという問題は切り離れない。

本論で取り上げるのは、American Anthropologist (1983), Canberra Anthropology (1983), そして、Journal of Youth and Adolescence (2000)でそれぞれ組まれた三つの特集である。言うまでもなく、メディアを巻き込んだミードフリーマン論争に関する論文や記事は多岐に渡り、これらの学会誌の域を遥かに超えていた。しかしながら、研究者による評価、評論、そして、論文の特集としてこれら三誌は代表的なものとして位置づけられる。これらの特集の内容を見るとき、表面的にはサモア文化をめぐる人間学的知識やそれらの知識をめぐる認識論的問題が取り上げられているものが主流である。しかし、それぞれの特集の中で、ディスコースの生産、循環、受容をめぐる（メタ）ディスコースが頻繁に現れるのである。本論はこうしたメタ・ディスコースに改めて注目しながら、アカデミックコミュニケーションにおけるディスコースの権威の問題について考察したい。